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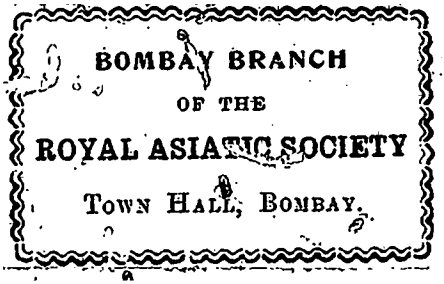

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Robert Southey.

LONDON. LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN & LONGMANS.

THE

LIFE & CORRESPONDENCE

of the late

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

EDITED BY HIS SON,

The Rev.d Charles Cuthbert Southey.

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VOL. I.

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1849.

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EDITED BY HIS SON, THE

REV. CHARLES CUTHBERT SOUTHEY, M.A.

CURATE OF PLUMBLAND, CUMBERLAND.

Second Edition.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

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PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1849.

PREFACE.

For the delay which has taken place in bringing forth this Work I am not responsible, as it has chiefly arisen from the circumstance that no literary executor was expressly named in my father's latest will; and in consequence of the difficulties which thus arose, it was not until the spring of 1848 that the materials, as far as they had then been collected, were put into my hands. I have since then made what speed I might in the preparation of them for the press, amid the engagements of other business, and with my hand often palsied by causes over which I had no control.

It were useless to endeavour to refute the various objections often made to a son's undertaking such a task; yet one remark may be permitted, that although a son may not be a fit person to pass judgment upon a father's character, he yet may faithfully chronicle his life; and is undoubtedly, by a natural right, the most proper person to have all private letters submitted to his eye, and all family affairs intrusted to his judgment.

With this feeling, and with the full conviction that I am acting in accordance with what would have been my father's own wish, I have not thought it right to shrink from an undertaking, for which I cannot claim to have in other respects any peculiar qualifications. Accordingly, my object has been, not to compose a regular biography, but rather to lay before the reader such a selection from my father's letters, as will give, in his own words, the history of his life; and I have only added such remarks as I judged necessary for connection or explanation; indeed the even tenor of his life, during its greater portion, affords but little matter for pure biography, and the course of his literary pursuits, his opinions on passing events, and the few incidents of his own career, will all be found narrated by himself in a much more natural manner than if his letters had been worked up into a regular narrative.

My father has long been before the public, and has obtained a large share of praise, as well as of censure and misrepresentation; he has yet, however, to be *fully known;* and this I have a good hope will be accomplished by the publication of these volumes;—that in them all his mind will appear; in its playfulness as well as its gravity, in its joys and its sorrows, and the gradual progress of his opinions be fairly traced, from the visionary views of his early youth, up to the fixed and settled convictions of his riper years; and if I have inserted any letters, or passages, which re-

late principally to his domestic life, and the affairs of the family circle, it has been with the conviction that he himself would not have wished them to be excluded, and that, although without them the events of his life might have been recorded, these would have formed only the outlines of the picture, which would have wanted all those finer touches that give to human nature its chief interest and its highest beauty.

I must now make my acknowledgements generally to those friends and correspondents of my father who have most kindly placed their letters at my disposal. And in particular to Mrs. Henry Bedford for those addressed to Grosvenor Charles Bedford, Esq., from which I have drawn my chief materials for this volume and which I have used largely throughout the work; to William Rickman, Esq., for those addressed to his father, the late John Rickman, Esq.; to the Right Hon. Charles W. W. Wynn; to John May, Esq.; to J. G. Lockhart, Esq., for those addressed to Sir Walter Scott; to Joseph Cottle, Esq.; to Mrs. Neville White and the Rev. James White; to the family of the late Sharon Turner, Esq.; to Walter Savage Landor, Esq.; to the family of the late Dr. Gooch; to the family of the late Rev. Nicholas Lightfoot; to Mr. Ebenezer Elliott; to Mr. Ticknor, of Boston; to Miss Elizabeth Charter; to Mrs. Hodson; to John Kenyon, Esq.; to Mrs. H. N. Coleridge; to William Wordsworth, Esq., Poet Laureat; and to Henry Taylor, Esq.

Other communications have been promised to me which I shall take a future opportunity of acknowledging.

While, however, my materials from these sources have been most extensive, there must still be many individuals with whom I have not been able to communicate, who have corresponded with my father upon literary subjects; and, should this meet the eye of any of these gentlemen, they would confer a great obligation upon me by permitting me the use of any of his letters to them, which are likely sometimes to possess an interest different from those addressed to intimate friends and frequent correspondents.

I may say, in conclusion, that whatever defects these volumes may possess, I have the satisfaction of feeling that they will verify my father's own words, — words not uttered boastingly, but simply as the answer of a conscience void of offence both towards God and man, — "I have this conviction, that, die when I may, my memory is one of those which will smell sweet, and blossom in the dust."

CHARLES CUTHBERT SOUTHEY.

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KESWICK.

THE

LIFE AND CORRESPONDENCE

OF

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

RECOLLECTIONS

OF

THE EARLY LIFE OF ROBERT SOUTHEY,

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF,

In a Series of Letters to his Friend, Mr. John May.

LETTER I.

HIS ANCESTORS.—THE CANNON SOUTHEYS.—HIS FATHER SENT TO LONDON.—REMOVED TO BRISTOL.

Keswick, Wednesday evening,
July 26th, 1820.

My dear friend John May,

SOME old divine has said that hell is paved with good resolutions. If Beelzebub has a tesselated pavement of this kind in one of his state rooms, I fear I shall be found to have contributed largely to its unsubstantial materials. But that I may save one good resolution at least, from being trodden

under hoof by him and his imps, here I begin the performance, hoping, rather than promising, even to myself, that I may find leisure and courage to pursue it to the end,—courage I mean to live again in remembrance with the dead, so much as I must needs do in retracing the course of my life. There are certain savages among whom the name of a deceased person is never mentioned; some superstition may have attached to this custom, but that the feeling in which it originates is natural I know both by experience and observation. My children never speak of their brother Herbert, and I never utter his name except in my prayers, unless some special cause acts upon me like a moral obligation.

I begin in the cloudy evening of a showery, louring, ungenial day,—no desirable omen for one who is about to record the recollections of six-and-forty years. But a most inappropriate one in my case, for I have lived in the sunshine, and am still looking forward with hope.

I cannot trace my family farther back by the church registers than Oct. 25. 1696, on which day my grandfather Thomas, the son of Robert Southey and Ann, his wife, was baptized at Wellington, in Somersetshire. The said Robert Southey had seven other children, none of whom left issue. In the subsequent entries of their birth (for Thomas was the eldest) he is designated sometimes as yeoman, sometimes as farmer. His wife's maiden name was Locke, and she was of the same family as the philosopher (so called) of that name, who is still held in more estimation than he deserves. She must have been his

niece, or the daughter of his first cousin. The register at Wellington goes back only to the year 1683. But I have heard that Robert's grandfather that, is, my great, great, great grandfather (my children's *tritavus*), was a great clothier at Wellington, and had eleven sons who peopled that part of the country with Southeys. In Robert's days there were no fewer than seven married men of the name in the same parish. Robert himself was the younger of two sons, and John his elder brother was the head of the family. They must have been of gentle blood (though so obscure that I have never by any accident met with the name in a book), for they bore arms in an age when armorial bearings were not assumed by those who had no right to them. The arms are a chevron argent, and three cross crosslets, argent, in a field sable. I should like to believe that one of my ancestors had served in the crusades, or made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

One of them has left the reputation of having been a great soldier; in the great rebellion I guess it must have been, but I neither know his name, nor on what side he fought. Another (and this must have been the Robert with whom my certain knowledge begins) was, as the phrase is, out in Monmouth's insurrection. If he had come before judge Jeffries in consequence, Nash would never have painted the happy but too handsome likeness of your god-daughter, which I have risen from my work ten times this day to look at in its progress; nor would you have received the intended series of these biographical letters. The entail of my mortal existence was in no small risk of

being cut off by the executioner. My father had the sword which was drawn (not bloodied I hope) in this unlucky quarrel; but it was lost in the wreck of his affairs.

John, the elder brother of this bold reformer and successful runaway, settled as a lawyer in Taunton, and held the office of registrar for the archdeaconry. He married the heiress of the Cannon family, and upon the death of her father fixed his residence at the manor house of Fitzhead in Somersetshire, which was her property. By this marriage he had one son and two daughters. John Cannon Southey, the son, practised the law; one daughter married the last of the Periam family, and survived him; the other married one of the Lethbridges, and had only one child, a daughter. That daughter married Hugh Somerville, then a colonel in the army, and brother to James Lord Somerville; she died in childbed of John Southey Somerville, her only issue.

My grandfather settled at Holford Farm, an estate belonging to his uncle John, in the parish of Lydiard St. Laurence, about ten miles north of Taunton, under the Quantock Hills. This removal was made when John obtained possession of his wife's property; the first use he made of it, therefore, seems to have been to befriend his nephew. And I have discovered another good indication concerning him; his name appears among the subscribers to Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy, a presumption at least, that he had some regard for books, and a right way of thinking. He was very much respected and beloved. My grandfather regarded him with the greatest reverence, as

one from whose judgment there could be no appeal; what his uncle said or thought was always sufficient authority with him. Lydiard St. Laurence is a very retired hamlet, containing only three farm-houses, and having no other habitations within two miles of it. My grandfather brought his grandmother there, and there she died at the great age of 102. A maiden sister lived with him. She had a small estate held upon three lives; two of them fell, and the third, a worthless profligate, contrived from that time almost to support himself upon it. Knowing that my poor aunt Hannah was now dependent upon his life, he would never strike a stroke of work more. When his debts became troublesome, away went his wife to the poor old woman with a tale about writs, bailiffs, the jail, and jail fever; and in this manner was she continually fleeced and kept in continual fear, till the rascal died at last of close attention at the alehouse. This story is worthy of insertion in an account of English tenures.

The removal from Wellington to a lonely hamlet seems to have brought my grandfather within the pale of the Established Church, for he had been bred up as a Dissenter. (The old sword, therefore, was probably pursuing its old courses when it went into the field in rebellion.) Aunt Hannah, however, though an inoffensive kind-hearted woman in other respects, retained so much of the essential acid of puritanism in her composition, that she frequently chastised her niece Mary for going into the fields with her playmates on a Sunday: she and her brothers and sisters,

she said, had never been suffered to go out of the house on the Sabbath, except to meetings.

My grandfather did not marry till he was forty-five; probably he could not have maintained a family before he was settled upon his uncle's farm. His wife's name was Joan Mullens. They had three sons, John, Robert (who was my father), and Thomas, and two daughters, Hannah and Mary, all born at Halford. The boys received what in those days was thought a good education. The elder, being designed for the law (in which his name and family connections would assist him), learnt a little Latin; he lived more with Cannon Southey than with his parents, both in his boyhood and youth, as his sister Mary did with Madam Periam or Madam Lethbridge (this was in the time when that title was in common use in the West of England), being always with one or the other as long as they lived. But Cannon Southey's House was a bad school for him. He was looked upon as the probable heir of the family after the birth of young Somerville, who was always a weakly child. The two younger brothers were qualified for trade. My father had preserved his cyphering book, and I would have preserved it too, as carefully as any of my own manuscripts, if it had not been lost at the household wreck at his bankruptcy. If you will look in that little treatise of mine upon the "Origin, Nature, and Object of the New System of Education," you will find a passage at pp. 85, 86, written in remembrance of this cyphering-book, and of the effects which it produced upon me in early boyhood.

When my uncle John was about to begin business as an attorney in Taunton, Cannon Southey, who was then the head of the family, lent him 100*l.* to start with. "That hundred pounds," he used to say, with a sort of surly pride, "I repaid, with interest, in six months, and that is the only favour for which I was ever obliged to my relations." Cannon Southey, however, though not very liberal to his kin, had a just regard to their legal rights, and left his property in trust for his great nephew, John Southey Somerville and his issue, with the intention that if he, who was then a child, should die without issue, the estates should descend to the Southeys; and, that the whole property might go together, he willed his leasehold estates (which would else have been divided among the next of kin) in remainder upon the same contingency to my uncle John and his two brothers, and to the sons of each in succession, as the former branch might fail.

Robert, my father, was passionately fond of the country and of country sports. The fields should have been his station, instead of the shop. He was placed with a kinsman in London, who, I believe, was a grocer somewhere in the city,—one of the eleven tribes that went out from Wellington. I have heard him say, that as he was one day standing at this person's door, a porter went by carrying a hare, and this brought his favourite sport so forcibly to mind, that he could not help crying at the sight. This anecdote in Wordsworth's hands would be worth as much as the Reverie of poor Susan. Before my father had been twelvemonths in London his master

died. Upon which he was removed to Bristol, and placed with William Britton, a linendraper in Wine Street. The business at that time was a profitable one, and Britton's the best shop of its kind in the town, which is as much as saying that there was not a better in the West of England. This must have been about the end of George the Second's reign. Shop-windows were then as little used in this country, as they are now in most of the continental towns. I remember Britton's shop still open to the weather, long after all the neighbours had glazed theirs; and I remember him, from being the first tradesman in his line, fallen to decay in his old age, and sunk in sottishness, still keeping on a business which had dwindled almost to nothing. My father, I think, was not apprenticed to him; because if he had served a regular apprenticeship, it would have entitled him to the freedom of the city, and I know that he was not a freeman: he lived with him, however, twelve or fourteen years. Among the acquaintance with whom he became intimate during that time, was my half uncle Edward Tyler, then employed in a Coventry Warehouse, in Broad Street, belonging to the Troughtons. This introduced him to my grandmother's house.

LETTER II.

THE HILLS.—THE BRADFORDS.—WILLIAM TYLER.—ANECDOTE OF HIM.—HIS GRANDFATHER'S DEATH.

Tuesday, August 1st, 1820.

MRS. HILL, my grandmother, was, at the time of which I am now writing, a widow; her maiden name was Bradford. I know nothing more of her father than that he was a Herefordshire man, and must have been of respectable property and connections, as appears by his having married into one of the best families in the county, and sending a son to college. His wife's name was Mrs. Margaret Croft. —I have it written in gold letters, with the date 1704, in a copy of Nelson's Festivals and Fasts, which descended as a favourite devotional book to my mother. They had three children; Herbert, so named after the Croft family,— another son (William, I think, by name), who was deaf and dumb, and just lived to grow up, —and my grandmother Margaret.

My grandmother was very handsome: little Georgiana Hill, my uncle says, reminds him strongly of her; and I remember her enough to recognise a likeness in the shape of the face, and in the large, full, clear, bright brown eyes. Her first husband, Mr. Tyler, was of a good family in Herefordshire, nearly related I *know* he was, and nephew, I *think*, to one of that name who was Bishop of Hereford. He lived at Pembridge. The seat of the family was at

Dilwyn; where his elder brother lived, who either was not married, or left no issue. I have hardly heard any thing of him, except that on his wedding day he sung a song after dinner, which could not be thought very complimentary to his bride; for, though it began by saying,

> "Ye gods who gave to me a wife
> Out of your grace and favour,
> To be the comfort of my life,
> And I was glad to have her,"

(thus much I remember of the rhymes,) it ended with saying that, whenever they might think fit, he was ready to resign her. It happened, however, that the resignation was to be on the wife's part. He died in the prime of life, leaving four children, Elizabeth, John, William, and Edward; and his widow, after no very long interval, married Edward Hill of Bedminster, in the county of Somersetshire, near Bristol, and was transplanted with her children to that place.

Edward Hill was the seventh in succession of that name. His fathers had lived and died respectably and contentedly upon their own lands in the beautiful vale of Ashton, the place of all others which I remember with most feeling. You see it from Clifton, on the other side of the river Avon; Warton has well characterized it in one of his odes as Ashton's *elmy* Vale. The Hills are called gentlemen upon their tombstones in Ashton churchyard, where my father, two of my brothers, my three sisters, and my poor dear cousin Margaret, are deposited with them. Edward Hill, the seventh, was a lawyer and a widower;

he had two children by his first marriage, a son, Edward the eighth, and a daughter, old enough I believe at the time of his second marriage for the daughter to be married, and the son very soon to hold a commission in the marines. He was a fine handsome man, of considerable talents, and of a convivial temper. I have heard him spoken of with admiration by persons who were intimate with him in their youth. He could make verses, too, after the fashion of that age. I have somewhere a poem of his, in his own writing, which came to my mother after *her* mother's death, and, in like manner, descended into my possession: it is not therefore without a mournful feeling that I recall to mind the time when it was first shown me, and the amusement which it then afforded me. It was a love poem, addressed to my grandmother during the days of courtship; it intimated some jealousy of a rival, who was called Strephon, and there was a note at the bottom of the page upon this name, explaining that it meant "the young Justice."

William Tyler, the second brother, was a remarkable person. Owing to some defect in his faculties, so anomalous in its kind that I never heard of a similar case, he could never be taught to read; the letters he could tell separately, but was utterly incapable of combining them, and taking in their meaning by the eye. He could write, and copy in a fair hand any thing that was set before him, whether in writing or in print; but it was done letter by letter without understanding a single word. As to self-government he was entirely incompetent, so much so that I think

he could hardly be considered responsible as a moral being for his actions; yet he had an excellent memory, an observing eye, and a sort of *half-saved* shrewdness which would have qualified him, had he been born two centuries earlier, to have worn motley, and figured with a cap and bells and a bauble in some baron's hall. Never did I meet with any man so stored with old saws and anecdotes gathered up in the narrow sphere wherein he moved. I still remember many of them, though he has been dead more than thirty years. The motto to Kehama *, as the Greek reference, when the abbreviations are rightly understood, may show, is one of my uncle William's sayings. When it was found impossible to make any thing of him by education, he was left to himself, and passed more time in the kitchen than in the parlour, because he stood in fear of his step-father. There he learnt to chew tobacco and to drink.

Strange creature as he was, I think of him very often, often speak of him, quote some of his odd apt sayings, and have that sort of feeling for his memory, that he is one of the persons whom I should wish to meet in the world to come.

The man of whom he learnt the use, or rather the abuse, of tobacco, was a sottish servant, as ignorant as a savage of everything which he ought to have known; that is to say of everything which ought to have been taught him. My mother, when a very little girl, reproved him once for swearing. "For shame, Thomas," she said, "you should not say such

* I have heard my father say, that this proverb was rendered into Greek by Mr. Coleridge. — Ed.

naughty words! for shame! say your prayers, Thomas!" "No, Missey!" said the poor wretch, "I sha'n't; I sha'n't say my prayers. I never said my prayers in all my life, Missey; and I sha'n't begin now." My uncle William (the Squire he was called in the family) provoked him dangerously once. He was dozing beside the fire, with his hat on, which, as is still the custom among the peasantry (here in Cumberland at least), he always wore in the house. You, perhaps, are not enough acquainted with the mode of chewing tobacco, to know that in vulgar life a quid commonly goes through two editions; and that after it has been done with, it is taken out of the mouth, and reserved for a second regale. My uncle William, who had learnt the whole process from Thomas, and always faithfully observed it, used to call it, in its intermediate state, an old soldier. A sailor deposits, or, if there be such a word (and if there is not, there ought to be), *re*-posits it in his tobacco-box. I have heard my brother Tom say, that this practice occasioned a great dislike in the navy to the one and two pound notes; for when the men were paid in paper, the tobacco-box served them for purse or pocket-book in lack of any thing better, and notes were often rendered illegible by the deep stain of a wet quid. Thomas's place for an old soldier between two campaigns, while he was napping and enjoying the narcotic effects of the first mastication, was the brim of his hat; from whence the Squire on this occasion stole the veteran quid, and substituted in its place a dead mouse just taken from the trap. Presently the sleeper, half-wakening without un-

closing his eyes, and half-stupefied, put up his hand, and, taking the mouse with a finger and thumb, in which the discriminating sense of touch had been blunted by coarse work and unclean habits, opened his mouth to receive it, and, with a slow sleepy tongue, endeavoured to accommodate it to its usual station, between the double teeth and the cheek. Happening to put it in headforemost, the hind legs and the tail hung out, and a minute or more was spent in vain endeavours to lick these appendages in, before he perceived, in the substance, consistence, and taste, something altogether unlike tobacco. Roused at the same time by a laugh which could no longer be suppressed, and discovering the trick which had been played, he started up in a furious rage, and, seizing the poker, would have demolished the Squire for this practical jest, if he had not provided a retreat by having the doors open, and taking shelter where Thomas could not, or dared not, follow him.

Enough of Uncle William for the present. Edward, the remaining brother of the Tyler side, was a youth who, if he had been properly brought up, and brought forward in a manner suitable to his birth and connections, might have made a figure in life, and have done honour to himself and his family. He had a fine person, a good understanding, and a sweet temper, which made him too easily contented with any situation and any company into which he was thrown. My grandfather has much to answer for on his account. Except sending him to a common day-school, kept by a very uncommon sort of man,

(of whom more hereafter) he left him to himself, and let him grow and run to seed in idleness.

My grandfather would have acquired considerable property, if he had not been cut off by an acute disorder. He had undertaken to recover some disputed rights for the church of which he was a parishioner, at his own risk and expense, on condition of receiving the additional tythes which might be eventually recovered during a certain number of years, or of being remunerated out of them in proportion to the cost and hazard and trouble of the adventure. The points were obstinately contested; but he carried them all, and died almost immediately afterwards, in the year 1765, aged sixty.

LETTER III.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE HILLS.—PARSON COLLINS.

Nov. 16th, 1820.

MY grandmother's jointure from her first husband was 200*l.* a year, which was probably equivalent to thrice that sum in these days. The Tylers had from their father 600*l.* each. Miss Tyler lived with her Uncle Bradford, of whom and of her I shall speak hereafter. I must now speak of the Hills. My uncle (it is so habitual to me to speak and write of him, and of him only by that name, κατ' ἐξοχήν, that I will not constrain myself to use any farther designation) — my uncle, and his brother Joseph, and Edward Tyler went by day to a school in the village

kept by one of the strangest fellows that ever wore a cassock, or took up the trade of tuition. His name was Collins, he was clever and profligate, and eked out his ways and means by authorship; scribbling for inclination, and publishing for gain. One of his works I recollect among my uncle's books in Miss Tyler's possession; its title is "Hell's Gates open;" but not having looked into it since I was a mere boy, I only know that it is satirical, as the name may seem to import. I sent for another of his publications some years ago from a catalogue, not as any thing of value, but because he had been my uncle's first schoolmaster, and I knew who and what he was; it is to be wished that every person who knew me would think that a good reason for buying my works: I should be very much obliged to them.— It is a little book in the unusual form of a foolscap quarto, and because it contains one fact which is really curious as matter of history, I give its title* at the bottom of the page. This publication is in no respect creditable to its author, and, on the score of decency, highly discreditable to him. But the fact, which is well worth the two shillings I gave for the book (though but a halfpenny fact), is, that, as late as the end of George the Second's reign, or the beginning of

* Miscellanies in Prose and Verse; consisting of Essays, Abstracts, Original Poems, Letters, Tales, Translations, Panegyricks, Epigrams, and Epitaphs.

"Sunt bona, sunt quædam mediocria, sunt mala plura;
Quæ legis hic aliter non fit, abite, liber."— MARTIAL.

"Things good, things bad, things middling when you look,
You'll find to constitute, my friends, this book."

By Emanuel Collins, A.B., late of Wadham College, Oxford. Bristol: printed by E. Farley, in Small Street. 1762.

George the Third's, there were persons in Bristol, who, from political scruples of conscience, refused to take King William's halfpence, and these persons were so numerous that the magistrates thought it necessary to interfere, because of the inconvenience which they occasioned in the common dealings of trade and of the markets. William's copper money was then in common currency, and indeed I myself remember it, having, between the years 1786 and 1790, laid by some half dozen of his halfpence with the single or double head, among the foreign pieces and others of rare occurrence which came within my reach.

Devoid as his Miscellanies are of any merit, Parson Collins, as he was called (not in honour of the cloth), had some humour. In repairing the public road, the labourers came so near his garden wall, that they injured the foundations, and down it fell. He complained to the waywardens, and demanded reparation, which they would have evaded if they could, telling him it was but an old wall, and in a state of decay. "Gentlemen," he replied, "old as the wall was it served my purpose. But, however, I have not the smallest objection to your putting up a second-hand one in its place." This anecdote I heard full five-and-thirty years ago from one of my school-masters, who had been a rival of Collins, and was satirized by him in the Miscellanies. His school failed him, not because he was deficient in learning, of which he seems to have had a full share for his station, but because of his gross and scandalous misconduct. He afterwards kept something so like an alehouse, that he got into a scrape with his superiors.

One of his daughters kept a village shop at Chew Magna in Somersetshire, and dealt with my father for such things as were in his way. She used to dine with us whenever she came to Bristol, and was always a welcome guest for her blunt honest manners, and her comical oddity. Her face was broad and coarse, like a Tartar's, but with quick dark eyes and a fierce expression. She was one of those persons who could say, *quidlibet cuilibet de quolibet.*

I perceive that I should make an excellent correspondent for Mr. Urban, and begin to suspect that I have mistaken my talent, and been writing histories and poems when I ought to have been following the rich veins of gossip and garrulity. All this, however, is not foreign to my purpose. For I wish not only to begin *ab ovo*, but to describe every thing relating to the nest. And he who paints a bird's-nest ought not to represent it nakedly *per se*, but *in situ*, in its place, and with as many of its natural accompaniments as the canvas will admit. It is not manners and fashions alone that change and are perpetually changing with us. The very constitution of society is unstable; it *may*, and in all probability *will*, undergo as great alterations, in the course of the next two or three centuries, as it has undergone in the last. The transitions are likely to be more violent, and far more rapid. At no very distant time, these letters, if they escape the earthquake and the volcano, may derive no small part of their interest and value from the faithful sketches which they contain of a stage of society which has already passed away, and of a state of things which shall then have ceased to exist.

LETTER IV.

HIS MOTHER'S BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD.—HER MARRIAGE.—HIS OWN BIRTH.

MY mother was born in 1752. She was a remarkably beautiful infant, till, when she was between one and two years old, an abominable nursemaid carried her, of all places in the world, to Newgate (as was afterwards discovered); and there she took the small-pox in its most malignant form. It seemed almost miraculous that she escaped with life and eyesight, so dreadfully severe was the disease; but her eyebrows were almost destroyed, and the whole face seamed with scars. While she was a mere child, she had a paralytic affection, which deadened one side from the hip downward, and crippled her for about twelvemonths. Some person advised that she should be placed out of doors in the sunshine as much as possible; and one day, when she had been carried out as usual into the fore-court, in her little arm-chair, and left there to see her brothers at play, she rose from her seat to the astonishment of the family, and walked into the house. The recovery from that time was complete. The fact is worthy of notice, because some persons may derive hope from it in similar cases, and because it is by no means improbable that the sunshine really effected the cure. The manner by which I should explain this, would lead to a theory somewhat akin to that of Bishop Berkeley upon the virtues of tar-water.

There are two portraits of my mother, both taken by Robert Hancock in 1798. My brother Tom has the one; the other hangs opposite me where I am now seated in my usual position at my desk. Neither of these would convey to a stranger a just idea of her countenance. That in my possession is very much the best: it represents her as she then was, with features care-worn and fallen away, and with an air of melancholy which was not natural to her; for never was any human being blest with a sweeter temper, or a happier disposition. She had an excellent understanding, and a readiness of apprehension, which I have rarely known surpassed. In quickness of capacity, in the kindness of her nature, and in that kind of moral magnetism which wins the affections of all within its sphere, I never knew her equal. To strangers she must probably have appeared much disfigured by the smallpox. I, of course, could not be sensible of this. Her complexion was very good, and nothing could be more expressive than her fine clear hazel eyes.

Female education was not much regarded in her childhood. The ladies who kept boarding-schools in those days did not consider it necessary to possess any other knowledge themselves than that of ornamental needlework. Two sisters, who had been mistresses of the most fashionable school in Herefordshire, fifty years ago, used to say when they spoke of a former pupil, "*Her* went to school to *we*:" and the mistress of which, some ten years later, was thought the best school near Bristol (where Mrs. Siddons sent her daughter), spoke, to my perfect

recollection, much such English as this. My mother, I believe, never went to any but a dancing-school, and her state was the more gracious. But her half-sister, Miss Tyler, was placed at one in the neighbourhood under a Mrs. ——, whom I mention because her history is characteristic of those times. Her husband carried on the agreeable business of a butcher in Bristol, while she managed a school for young ladies about a mile out of the town. His business would not necessarily have disqualified her for this occupation (though it would be no recommendation), Kirke White's mother, a truly admirable woman, being in this respect just under like circumstances. But Mrs. —— might, with more propriety, have been a blacksmith's wife; as, in that case, Vulcan might have served for a type of her husband in his fate, but not in the complacency with which he submitted to it, horns sitting as easily on his head as upon the beasts which he slaughtered. She was a handsome woman, and her children were, like the Harleian Miscellany, by different authors. This was notorious; yet her school flourished notwithstanding, and she retired from it at last with a competent fortune, and was visited as long as she lived by her former pupils. This may serve to show a great improvement in the morals of middle life.

Two things concerning my mother's childhood and youth may be worthy of mention. One is, that she had for a fellow-scholar at the dancing-school Mary Darby (I think her name was), then in her beauty and innocence, soon afterwards notorious as the Prince of Wales's Perdita, and to be remembered

hereafter, though a poor poetess, as having, perhaps, a finer feeling of metre, and more command of it, than any of her contemporaries. The other is, that my mother, who had a good ear for music, was taught by her father to whistle; and he succeeded in making her such a proficient in this unusual accomplishment, that it was his delight to place her upon his knee, and make her entertain his visitors with a display. This art she never lost, and she could whistle a song-tune as sweetly as a skilful player could have performed it upon the flute.

My grandmother continued to live in the house at Bedminster, which her husband had built, and which after his death had been purchased by Edward Tyler. It was about half an hour's walk, *εὐζώνῳ ἀνδρὶ*, from Bristol; and my father, having been introduced there, became in process of time a regular Sabbath guest. How long he had been acquainted with the family before he thought of connecting himself with it, I do not know; but in the year 1772, being the 27th of his own age, and the 20th of my mother's, they were married at Bedminster church. He had previously left Britton's service, and opened a shop for himself in the same business and in the same street, three doors above. Cannon Southey had left him 100*l.*; my mother had a legacy of 50*l.* from her uncle Bradford; my father formed a partnership with his younger brother Thomas, who had such another bequest as his from the same quarter; perhaps also he might have saved something during his years of service, and the business may have begun with a capital of 500*l.*; I should think not more. Shop

signs were general in those days; but the custom of suspending them over the street, as is still done at inns in the country, was falling into disuse. My father, true to his boyish feelings, and his passion for field sports (which continued unabated, notwithstanding the uncongenial way of life in which his lot had fallen), took a hare for his device. It was painted on a pane in the window on each side of the door, and was engraved on his shopbills. This became interesting when he told me of his shedding tears at the sight of the hare in the porter's hand in London; and I often think of having one cut upon a seal, in remembrance of him and of the old shop. Bryan the Prophet told me, in the days of Richard Brothers, that I was of the tribe of Judah,—a sort of nobility which those prophets had the privilege of discovering without any assistance from the Herald's office. Had he derived me from Esau instead of Jacob, my father's instincts might have induced me to lend a less incredulous ear.

The first child of this marriage was born August 1. 1773, and christened John Cannon. He lived only to be nine or ten months old. He was singularly beautiful; so much so, that, when I made my appearance on the 12th of August, 1774 *, I was sadly dis-

* My birth-day was Friday the 12th of August, 1774,—the time of my birth half-past eight in the morning, according to the family Bible. According to my astrological friend Gilbert, it was a few minutes before the half hour, in consequence of which I am to have a pain in my bowels when I am about thirty, and Jupiter is my deadly antagonist; but I may thank the stars for "a gloomy capability of walking through desolation."—*Letter to Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq., Sept.* 30. 1797.

paraged by comparison with him. My mother asking if it was a boy, was answered by her nurse in a tone as little favourable to me as the opinion was flattering. "Ay, a great ugly boy!" and she added, when she told me this, "God forgive me!—when I saw what a great red creature it was, covered with rolls of fat, I thought I should never be able to love him."

LETTER V.

FIRST GOING TO SCHOOL.—BIRTH OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS.—MISS TYLER.

March 20th, 1821.

THE popular saint of the democratic cantons in Switzerland, St. Nicolas de Huë (to whom I paid my respects in his own church at Saxeln), remembered his own birth, knew his mother and the midwife as soon as he was born, and never forgot the way by which he was taken to be christened, nor the faces of the persons who were present at that ceremony. But he was an extraordinary child, who, though he neither danced nor sung nor preached before he was born (all which certain other saints are said to have done), had revelations in that state, and saw the light of Heaven before he came into the light of day. It has pleased the metaphysico-critico-politico-patriotico-phoolo-philosopher Jeremy Bentham to designate me, in one of his opaque works, by the appellation of St. Southey, for which I humbly thank his Jeremy

Benthamship, and have in part requited him. It would be very convenient if I had the same claim to this honour, on the score of miraculous memory, as the aforesaid Nicolas—but the twilight of my recollections does not begin till the third year of my age.*

However, though I did not, like him, know the midwife at the time when she had most to do with me, I knew her afterwards, for she brought all my brothers and sisters into the world. She was the wife of a superannuated Baptist preacher, who, as was formerly common for Baptist preachers to do, kept a shop, dealing in medicines and quackery among other things. Preachers of this grade have now nearly, or entirely disappeared; and even the Methodists will not allow their ministers to engage in any kind of trade. I mention this family, therefore, as belonging to a class which is now extinct. They were stiff Oliverians in their politics. The husband was always at his studies, which probably lay in old puritanical divinity; he was chiefly supported by his wife's professional labours, and I well remember hearing him spoken of as a miserable morose tyrant. The only son of this poor woman lost his life by a singularly dismal accident, when he was grown up and doing well in

* My feelings were very acute; they used to amuse themselves by making me cry at sad songs and dismal stories. I remember "Death and the Lady," "Billy Pringle's Pig," "The children sliding on the ice all on a summer's day," and Witherington fighting on his stumps at Chevy Chase. This was at two years old, when my recollection begins,—prior identity, I have none;—they tell me I used to beg them not to proceed. I know not whether our feelings are blunted or rendered more acute by action; in either case these pranks are wrong with children. I cannot now hear a melancholy tale in silence, but I have learnt to whistle.—*Letter to G. C. Bedford, Esq., Sept.* 30. 1796.

the world. Hastening one day to see his mother, upon the alarm of a sudden and dangerous illness which had seized her, he came to the draw-bridge on St. Augustine's Back just as they were beginning to raise it for the passage of a vessel. In his eagerness he attempted to spring across, but not calculating upon the rise, he fell in, and the vessel past over him, inevitably, before any attempts to save him could be made. I used to cross the bridge almost every day for many years of my life; and the knowledge of his fate warned me from incurring the same danger, which otherwise in all likelihood, active as I then was, and always impatient of loss of time, I should very often have done.

It was my lot to be consigned to a foster-mother, a girl, or rather a young woman, who had been from childhood employed by my grandmother, first in the garden, then in household affairs, a poor, thoughtless, simple creature, who, however, proved a most affectionate nurse to me. The first day that I was taken to school she was almost heart-broken at the scene between me and the school-mistress,—a scene which no doubt appeared to me of the most tragical kind. Having ushered me into the room and delivered me into custody, she made a hasty retreat, but stood without the door, looking through a curtained window which gave light into the passage, and listening to what ensued. It was a place where I was sent to be out of the way for a few hours morning and evening, for I was hardly older than Cuthbert is at this time, and though quite capable of learning the alphabet, far too young to be put to it as a task, or made to compre-

hend the fitness of sitting still for so long a time together on pain of the rod. Upon this occasion, when for the first time in my life I saw nothing but strange faces about me, and no one to whom I could look for kindness or protection, I gave good proof of a sense of physiognomy which never misled me yet, of honesty in speaking my opinion, and of a temerity in doing it by which my after life has often been characterised. Ma'am Powell had as forbidding a face (I well remember it) as can easily be imagined: and it was remarkable for having no eyelashes, a peculiarity which I instantly perceived. When the old woman, therefore, led me to a seat on the form, I rebelled as manfully as a boy in his third year could do, crying out, "Take me to Pat! I don't like ye! you've got ugly eyes! take me to Pat, I say!" Poor Pat went home with the story, and cried as bitterly in relating it as I had done during the unequal contest, and at the utter discomfiture to which I was fain to submit, when might, as it appeared to me, overpowered right.*

* Here I was at intervals till my sixth year, and formed a delectable plan with two school-mates for going to an island and living by ourselves. We were to have one mountain of gingerbread and another of candy. . . . . I had a great desire to be a soldier: Colonel Johnson once gave me his sword; I took it to bed, and went to sleep in a state of most complete happiness,—in the morning it was gone. Once I sat upon the grass in what we call a brown study; at last, out it came, with the utmost earnestness to my aunt Mary—"Auntee Polly, I should like to have all the weapons of war, the gun and the sword, and the halbert, and the pistol, and all the weapons of war." Once I got horsewhipped for taking a walk with a journeyman barber who lived opposite, and promised to give me a sword. This took a strange turn when I was about nine years old; I had been reading the historical plays of Shakspeare, and concluded there must be civil wars in my own time, and resolved to be a very great man, like the Earl of Warwick. Now it would be prudent to make

My sister Eliza was born in 1776, and died of the measles in 1779. I remember her as my earliest playmate, by help of some local circumstances, and sometimes fancy that I can call to mind a faint resemblance of her face. My brother Thomas came into the world 1777; Louisa next, in 1779. This was a beautiful creature, the admiration of all who beheld her. My aunt Mary was one day walking with her down Union Street, when Wesley happened to be coming up, and the old man was so struck with the little girl's beauty, that he stopped and exclaimed, "Oh! sweet creature!" took her by the hand, and gave her a blessing. That which in affliction we are prone to think a blessing, and which, perhaps, in sober reflection, may be justly thought so, befell her soon afterwards,—an early removal to a better world. She died of hydrocephalus, a disease to which the most promising children are the most liable. Happily neither her parents nor her grandmother ever suspected, what is exceedingly probable, that in her case the disease may have been induced by their dipping her every morning in a tub of the coldest well water. This was done from an old notion of strengthening her: the shock was dreadful, the poor child's horror of it every morning when taken out of bed still more so; I cannot remember having seen it without horror; nor do I believe that among

partizans, so I told my companions at school that my mother was a very good woman, and had taught me to interpret dreams; they used to come and repeat their dreams to me, and I was artful enough to refer them all to great civil wars, and the appearance of a very great man who was to appear—meaning myself. I had resolved that Tom should be a great man too; and actually dreamt once of going into his tent to wake him the morning before a battle, so full was I of these ideas.—*Letter to G. C. Bedford, Esq., Sept.* 30. 1797.

all the preposterous practices which false theories have produced, there was ever a more cruel and perilous one than this. John, the next child, was born in 1782, and died in infancy.

My recollections of Eliza and Louisa are more imperfect than they might otherwise have been, because during those years I was very much from home, being sometimes at school, and sometimes with Miss Tyler, of whose situation and previous history I must now speak, because they had a material influence upon the course of my life.

Miss Tyler, who was born in the year 1739, passed the earlier part of her life with her maternal uncle at Shobdon, a little village in Herefordshire, where he resided upon a curacy. Mr. Bradford had been educated at Trinity College, Oxford, and was in much better circumstances than country curates in general. He had an estate in Radnorshire of respectable value, and married the sister of Mr. Greenly, of Titley in Herefordshire, who, being of so good a family, had probably a good fortune. He appears to have possessed some taste for letters, and his library was well provided with the professional literature of that age. Shobdon, though a remote place, gave him great opportunities of society: Lord Bateman resided there, in one of the finest midland situations that England affords; and a clergyman of companionable talents and manners was always a welcome guest at his table. Miss Tyler also became a favourite with Lady Bateman, and spent a great deal of time with her, enough to acquire the manners of high life, and too many of its habits and notions. Mrs. Bradford

died a few years before her husband; not however till he was too far advanced in life, or too confirmed in his habits, to think of marrying again. By that time he had become a victim to the gout. An odd accident happened to him during one of his severe fits, at a time when no persuasions could have induced him to put his feet to the ground, or to believe it possible that he could walk. He was sitting with his legs up, in the full costume of that respectable and orthodox disease, when the ceiling being somewhat old, part of it gave way, and down came a fine nest of rats, old and young together, plump upon him. He had what is called an antipathy to these creatures, and, forgetting the gout in the horror which their visitation excited, sprung from his easy chair, and fairly ran down stairs.

Miss Tyler had the management of his house after his wife's death, and she had also in no small degree the management of the parish. She had influence enough to introduce inoculation there, and I believe great merit in the exertions which she made on that occasion, and the personal attention which she bestowed. It occurs to my recollection now also while I write, that she effected a wholesome and curious innovation in the poor-house, by persuading them to use beds stuffed with beech leaves, according to a practice in some parts of France, which she had heard or read of. It was Mr. Bradford who placed my uncle Mr. Hill at Oxford, first at St. Mary Hall, afterwards at Christ Church, where he obtained a studentship, which must have been by means of some Shobdon connections. When Mr. Bradford died,

which was in the year 1778, he left the whole of his property to Miss Tyler, except 50*l.* to my mother, and a small provision, charged upon his estates, for my poor uncle William, as one utterly incapable of providing for himself.

Finding herself mistress of 1500*l.* in money from Mr. Bradford's effects, besides the estate, and her own paternal portion of 600*l.*, she began to live at large, and to frequent watering places. At one of these (I think it was Weymouth) she fell in with Armstrong, the physician and poet, a writer deservedly respectable for his poem upon Health, and deservedly infamous for another of his productions. He recommended her to try the climate of Lisbon, less for any real or apprehended complaint, than because he perceived the advice would be agreeable; and thus before you and I were born did Armstrong prepare the way for our friendship, as well as for the great literary labours of my life. To Lisbon accordingly she went, taking with her my uncle, who had lately entered into orders, and Mrs. —— (a distant relation, the widow of a decayed Bristol merchant) as a sort of *ama*. Miss Palmer (sister of that Palmer who planned the mail coach system), one of her Bath acquaintances, joined the party. They remained about twelve months abroad, where some of your friends no doubt remember them, during the golden age of the factory, in 1774, the year of my birth. Miss Tyler was then thirty-four. She was remarkably beautiful, as far as any face can be called beautiful in which the indications of a violent temper are strongly marked.

LETTER VI.

DESCRIPTION OF MISS TYLER'S HOUSE AT BATH. — INOCULATION. — MISS TYLER'S FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES.

April 7th, 1821.

ON her return from Lisbon Miss Tyler took a house in Bath, and there my earliest recollections begin, great part of my earliest childhood having been passed there.

The house was in Walcot parish, in which, five and forty years ago, were the skirts of the city. It stood alone, in a walled garden, and the entrance was from a lane. The situation was thought a bad one, because of the approach, and because the nearest houses were of a mean description; in other respects it was a very desirable residence. The house had been quite in the country when it was built. One of its fronts looked into the garden, the other into a lower garden, and over other garden grounds to the river, Bath Wick Fields (which are now covered with streets), and Claverton Hill, with a grove of firs along its brow, and a sham castle in the midst of their long dark line. I have not a stronger desire to see the Pyramids, than I had to visit that sham castle during the first years of my life. There was a sort of rural freshness about the place. The dead wall of a dwelling-house (the front of which was in Walcot Street) formed one side of the garden enclosure, and was covered with fine fruit trees: the way from the garden door to the house was between

that long house-wall, and a row of espaliers, behind which was a grass plat, interspersed with standard trees and flower beds, and having one of those green rotatory garden-seats shaped like a tub, where the contemplative person within may, like Diogenes, be as much in the sun as he likes. There was a descent by a few steps to another garden, which was chiefly filled with fragrant herbs, and with a long bed of lilies of the valley. Ground rent had been of little value when the house was built. The kitchen looked into the garden, and opened into it; and near the kitchen door was a pipe, supplied from one of the fine springs with which the country about Bath abounds, and a little stone cistern beneath. The parlour door also opened into the garden; it was bowered with jessamine, and there I often took my seat upon the stone steps.

My aunt, who had an unlucky taste for such things, fitted up the house at a much greater expense than she was well able to afford. She threw two small rooms into one, and thus made a good parlour, and built a drawing-room over the kitchen. The walls of that drawing-room were covered with a plain green paper, the floor with a Turkey carpet: there hung her own portrait by Gainsborough, with a curtain to preserve the frame from flies and the colours from the sun; and there stood one of the most beautiful pieces of old furniture I ever saw,—a cabinet of ivory, ebony, and tortoise-shell, in an ebony frame. It had been left her by a lady of the Spenser family, and was said to have belonged to the great Marlborough. I may mention as part of the parlour furniture a square

screen with a foot-board and a little shelf, because I have always had one of the same fashion myself, for its convenience; a French writing-table, because of its peculiar shape, which was that of a Cajou nut or a kidney, — the writer sat in the concave, and had a drawer on each side; an arm chair made of fine cherry wood, which had been Mr. Bradford's, and in which she always sat, — mentionable, because if any visitor who was not in her especial favour sat therein, the leathern cushion was always sent into the garden to be aired and purified before she would use it again; a mezzotinto print of Pope's Eloisa, in an oval black frame, because of its supposed likeness to herself; two prints in the same kind of engraving from pictures by Angelica Kauffman, one of Hector and Andromache, the other of Telemachus at the court of Menelaus, these I notice because they were in frames of Brazilian wood; and the great print of Pombal, *o grande Marquez*, in a similar frame, because this was the first portrait of any illustrious man with which I became familiar. The establishment consisted of an old man servant, and a maid, both from Shobdon. The old man used every night to feed the crickets. He died at Bath in her service.

Here my time was chiefly passed from the age of two till six. I had many indulgences, but more privations, and those of an injurious kind; want of playmates, want of exercise, never being allowed to do anything in which by possibility I might dirt myself; late hours in company, that is to say, late hours for a child, which I reckon among the privations (having always had the healthiest propensity for going to bed betimes);

late hours of rising, which were less painful perhaps, but in other respects worse. My aunt chose that I should sleep with her, and this subjected me to a double evil. She used to have her bed warmed, and during the months while this practice was in season I was always put into Molly's bed first, for fear of an accident from the warming-pan, and removed when my aunt went to bed, so that I was regularly wakened out of a sound sleep. This, however, was not half so bad as being obliged to lie till nine, and not unfrequently till ten in the morning, and not daring to make the slightest movement which could disturb her during the hours that I lay awake, and longing to be set free. These were, indeed, early and severe lessons of patience. My poor little wits were upon the alert at those tedious hours of compulsory idleness, fancying figures and combinations of form in the curtains, wondering at the motes in the slant sunbeam, and watching the light from the crevices of the window-shutters, till it served me at last by its progressive motion to measure the lapse of time. Thoroughly injudicious as my education under Miss Tyler was, no part of it was so irksome as this.

I was inoculated at Bath at two years old, and most certainly believe that I have a distinct recollection of it as an insulated fact, and the precise place where it was performed. My mother sometimes fancied that my constitution received permanent injury from the long preparatory lowering regimen upon which I was kept. Before that time, she used to say, I had always been plump and fat, but afterwards became the lean, lank, greyhound-like creature

that I have ever since continued. She came to Bath to be with me during the eruption. Except the spots upon the arm, I had only one pustule; afraid that this might not be enough, she gave me a single mouthful of meat at dinner, and, before night, above a hundred made their appearance, with fever enough to frighten her severely. The disease, however, was very favourable. A year or two afterwards, I was brought to the brink of death by a fever, and still I remember the taste of one of my medicines (what it was I know not), and the cup in which it was administered. I remember, also, the doses of bark which followed. Dr. Schomberg attended me on both occasions. One of Schomberg's sons was the midshipman who was much talked of some forty years ago for having fought Prince William Henry, then one of his shipmates. I think he is the author of a history of our naval achievements. Alexander, another son, was a fellow of Corpus, and died in 1790 or 1791, having lost the use of his lower parts by a stroke of the palsy. I had the mournful office of going often to sit by him as he lay upon his back in bed, when he was vainly seeking relief at Bath. Boy as I was, and till then a stranger to him, he, who had no friend or relation with him, was glad of the relief which even my presence afforded to his deplorable solitude.

Miss Tyler had a numerous acquaintance, such as her person and talents (which were of no ordinary kind) were likely to attract. The circle of her Herefordshire acquaintance, extending as far as the sphere of the three music meetings in the three

dioceses of Hereford, Worcester, and Gloucester, she became intimate with the family of Mr. Raikes, printer and proprietor of the Gloucester Journal. One of his sons introduced Sunday Schools * into this kingdom; others became India Directors, Bank Directors, &c., in the career of mercantile prosperity. His daughter, who was my aunt's friend, married Francis Newberry of St. Paul's Churchyard, son of that Francis Newberry who published Goody Two-shoes, Giles Gingerbread, and other such delectable histories in sixpenny books for children, splendidly bound in the flowered and gilt Dutch paper of former days. As soon as I could read, which was very early, Mr. Newberry presented me with a whole set of these books, more than twenty in number: I dare say they were in Miss Tyler's possession at her death, and in perfect preservation, for she taught me (and I thank her for it) never to spoil nor injure anything. This was a rich present, and may have been more instrumental than I am aware of in giving me that love of books, and that decided determination to literature, as the one thing desirable, which manifested itself from my childhood, and which no circumstances in after life ever slackened or abated.

I can trace with certainty the rise and direction of my poetical pursuits. They grew out of my aunt's intimacy with Miss ——. Her father had acquired a

* I know not where or when they were first instituted; but they are noticed in an ordinance of Albert and Isabel, in the year 1608, as then existing in the Catholic Netherlands, the magistrates being enjoined to see to their establishment and support in all places where they were not yet set on foot.

considerable property as a wax and tallow-chandler at Bath, and vested great part of it in a very curious manner for an illiterate tradesman. He had a passion for the stage, which he indulged by speculating in theatres; one he built at Birmingham, one at Bristol, and one at Bath. Poor man, he outlived his reasonable faculties, and was, when I knew him, a pitiable spectacle of human weakness and decay, hideously ugly, his nose grown out in knobs and bulbs, like an underground artichoke, his fingers crooked and knotted with the gout, filthy, irascible, helpless as an infant, and feebler than one in mind. In one respect this was happy for him. His wife was a kind, plain-mannered domestic woman; her clothes caught fire one day, she ran into the street in flames, and was burnt to death. Mrs. Coleridge, who was then a girl of eight or nine years old, and lived in the same street, saw her in flames, and remembers how frightfully the dogs barked at the sight. Her husband, though in the house at the time, never knew what had befallen her. He survived her many years, and would frequently say, she had been gone more than a week to Devizes, and it was time for her to come back. After this dreadful event, he lived with his two daughters, Miss —— and Mrs.—— (a widow), in Galloway's Buildings, in a house at which I often visited with my aunt, during fifteen or sixteen years of my life, occasionally for weeks together. Sometimes I was taken to see this deplorable old man, whose sight always excited in me a mingled feeling of horror and disgust, not to be recalled without some degree of pain. In consequence of his incapacity, the property of the Bath and Bristol theatres devolved upon

his children, and was administered by his son, who was in truth, a remarkable and rememberable person.

Mr. —— must have been about five-and-thirty when I first remember him, a man of great talents and fine person, with a commanding air and countenance, kind in his manners and in his nature; yet there was an expression in his eyes which I felt, before I had ever heard of physiognomy, or could have understood the meaning of the word. It was a wild unquiet look, a sort of inward emanating light, as if all was not as it ought to be within. I should pronounce now that it was the eye of one predisposed to insanity; and this I believe to have been the fact, though the disease manifested itself not in him, but in his children. They, indeed, had the double reason to apprehend such an inheritance, for their mother was plainly crazed with hypochondriacism and fantasticalness. She was a widow and an actress when he married her, and her humours soon made any place more agreeable to him than home. The children were my playmates at those rare times when I had any. The eldest son was taken from the Charter House, because he was literally almost killed there by the devilish cruelty of the boys; they used to lay him before the fire till he was scorched, and shut him in a trunk with sawdust till he had nearly expired with suffocation. The Charter House at that time was a sort of hell upon earth for the under boys. He was of weak understanding and feeble frame, very like his mother in person; he lived, however, to take orders, and I think I have heard that he died insane, as did one of his sisters, who perfectly resembled him. Two

other sons were at Eton; the elder of the two had one of the most beautiful countenances I ever remember to have seen, only that it had his father's eyes, and a more fearful light in them. He was a fine, generous, overflowing creature; but you could not look at him without feeling that some disastrous fate would befal one so rash, so inconsiderate, and withal so keenly susceptible. When he was at Cambridge he used to give orders to his gyp by blowing a French horn, and he had a tune for every specific command, which the gyp was trained to understand, till so noisy and unacademical a practice was forbidden. There he ran wild, and contracted debts in all imaginable ways, which his father, the most indulgent of fathers, again and again discharged. These habits clung to him after he had left college. On the last occasion, where his conduct had been deeply culpable, and a large sum had been paid for him, Mr. —— did not utter a single reproach, but in the most affectionate manner entreated him to put away all painful thoughts of the past, and look upon himself as if he were only now beginning life. The poor fellow could not bear his father's kindness, and knowing, perhaps, too surely, that he could not trust his own resolutions to amend his life, he blew out his own brains.

I had not seen him for several years before his death. When we were boys I admired him for his wit, his hilarity, his open generous temper, and his countenance, which might better be called *radiant* than described by any other epithet: but there was something which precluded all desire of intimacy.

If we had been thrown together in youth, there would have been an intellectual attraction between us; but intellect alone has never been the basis of my friendships, except in a single instance, and that instance proved the sandiness of such a foundation. Yet we liked each other; and I never think of him without a hope, or rather a belief, an inward and sure persuasion, that there is more mercy in store for human frailty than even the most liberal creed has authorized us to assert.

The next letter will explain in what way my acquaintance with this family was the means of leading

> My favoured footsteps to the Muses' hill,
> Whose arduous paths I have not ceased to tread,
> From good to better persevering still.

LETTER VII.

BATH AND BRISTOL THEATRES.—REMOVED TO ANOTHER DAY-SCHOOL.—THENCE TO A BOARDING SCHOOL AT CORSTON.—DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL AND SCHOOLMASTER.

September 2d, 1821.

THE Bath and Bristol theatres were then, and for many years afterwards, what in trade language is called *one concern.* The performers were stationed half the year in one city, half in the other. When they played on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at Bristol, they went to Bath on the Saturday, in two immense coaches, each as big as a caravan of wild beasts, and returned after the play. When the nights

of performance at Bath were Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, they played at Bristol on the Monday. Mondays and Saturdays were the fashionable nights. On Thursdays and Fridays they always played to thin, and very frequently to losing houses. The population of London is too large for a folly like this to show itself there.

Miss Tyler, through her intimacy with Miss ——, had the command of orders for free admission. She was exceedingly fond of theatrical representations, and there was no subject of which I heard so much from my earliest childhood. It even brought upon me once a most severe reprehension for innocently applying to the church a phrase which, I then learnt to my cost, belonged only to the playhouse, and saying one Sunday, on our return from morning service, that it had been a very *full house*. When I was taken to the theatre for the first time, I can perfectly well remember my surprise at not finding the pit literally a deep hole, into which I had often puzzled myself to think how or why any persons could possibly go. You may judge by this how very young I must have been. I recollect nothing more of the first visit, except that the play was the Fathers, a comedy of Fielding's, which was acted not more than one season, and the farce was Coxheath Camp. This recollection, however, by the help of that useful book the Biographia Dramatica, fixes the date to 1778, when I was four years old.

A half sheet of reminiscences, written one-and-twenty years ago at Lisbon, has recalled to my recollection this and a few other circumstances, which

might otherwise, perhaps, have been quite obliterated. Yet it surprises me to perceive how many things come to mind which had been for years and years forgotten! It is said that when earth is flung to the surface in digging a well, plants will spring up which are not found in the surrounding country, seeds having quickened in light and air, which had lain buried during unknown ages:—no unapt illustration for the way in which forgotten things are thus brought up from the bottom of one's memory.

I was introduced to the theatre before it was possible for me to comprehend the nature of the drama, so as to derive any pleasure from it, except as a mere show. What was going on upon the stage, as far as I understood it, appeared real to me; and I have been told that one night, when the Critic was represented, and I heard that Sir Walter Raleigh's head was to be cut off, I hid mine in Miss Mary Delamere's lap, and could not be persuaded to look up, till I was assured the dreaded scene was over. It was not long before I acquired a keen relish for the stage; but at this time my greatest pleasure was a walk in the fields; and the pleasure was heightened beyond measure if we crossed the river in the ferry boat at Walcot, or at the South Parade; short as the passage was, I have not yet forgotten the delight which it used to give me. There were three points beyond all others which I was desirous of reaching, the sham castle on Claverton Hill, a summer-house on Beechen Cliffs, and the grave of a young man, whom a practised gambler, by name (I think) Count Rice, had killed in a duel. The two former objects were

neither of them two miles distant; but they were up hill, and my aunt regarded it as an impossibility to walk so far. I did not reach them, therefore, till I was old enough to be in some degree master of my own movements. The tomb of the unfortunate duellist was at Bath Weston, and we got there once, which was an extraordinary exertion; but the usual extent of our walks into the country (which were very rare) was to a cottage in an orchard about half way to that village. It was always a great joy to me when I was sent for home, though my father's house was in one of the busiest streets in a crowded city; I had more liberty then, and was under no capricious restrictions, and I had more walks into the fields, though still too few. My mother sometimes, and sometimes my aunt Mary, would walk with me to Kingsdown, to Brandon Hill, Clifton, or that bank of the river which is called the Sea-Banks, and we often went to my grandmother's, where I liked best to be, because I had there a thorough enjoyment of the country.

Miss Tyler, whose ascendency over my mother was always that of an imperious elder sister, would not suffer me to be breeched till I was six years old, though I was tall of my age. I had a fantastic costume of nankeen for highdays and holydays, trimmed with green fringe; it was called a vest and tunic, or a *jam*. When at last I changed my dress, it was for coat, waistcoat, and breeches of foresters' green; at that time there was no intermediate form of apparel in use. I was then sent as a day scholar to a school on the top of St. Michael's or Mile Hill, which was

then esteemed the best in Bristol, kept by Mr. Foot*, a dissenting minister of that community who are called General Baptists, in contradistinction to the Particular or Calvinistic Baptists. Like most of his denomination, he had passed into a sort of low Arianism, if indeed he were not a Socinian. With this, however, I had no concern, nor did my parents regard it. To a child, indeed, it could be of no consequence; but a youth might easily and imperceptibly have acquired from it an injurious bias, if his good conduct and disposition had made him a favourite with him. He was an old man, and if the school had ever been a good one, it had woefully deteriorated. I was one of the least boys there, I believe the very least, and certainly both as willing and as apt to learn as any teacher could have desired; yet it was the only school where I was ever treated with severity. Lessons in the grammar, which I did not comprehend, and yet could have learned well enough by rote under gentle discipline and a good-natured teacher, were frightened out of my head, and then I was shut up during play-time in a closet at the top of the stairs, where there was just light enough through some bars to see my lesson by. Once he caned me cruelly, — the only time that any master ever laid his hand upon me, — and I am sure he deserved a beating much more than I did. There was a great deal of tyranny in the school, from the worst of which I was exempted, because I went home in the evening; but I stood in great fear of the big boys, and saw much more of the evil side of

* He published some letters to Bishop Hoadley. This I learn from Gregonne's *Sectes Religieuses.*

human nature than I should ever have learnt in the course of domestic education.

I had not been there more than twelve months when the master died. He was succeeded by John Prior Estlin, a Socinian minister, with whom in after years I was well acquainted, a good scholar, and an excellent man. Had I continued at the school, he would have grounded me well, for he was just the kind of man to have singled me out and taken pleasure in bestowing careful culture where it would not have been lost. Unfortunately, my father (I know not for what reason) thought proper to remove me upon Mr. Foot's death, and placed me at a school nine miles from Bristol, in a village called Corston, about a mile from the Globe at Newton, a well-known public house on the road between Bath and Bristol. The stage was to drop me at that public house, and my father to accompany it on horseback, and consign me to the master's care. When the time for our departure drew nigh, I found my mother weeping in her chamber; it was the first time I had ever seen her shed tears. The room (that wherein I was born) with all its furniture, and her position and look at that moment, are as distinct in my memory as if the scene had occurred but yesterday; and I can call to mind with how strong and painful an effort it was that I subdued my own emotions. I allude to this in the Hymn to the Penates, as

> The first grief I felt,
> And the first painful smile that clothed my front
> With feelings not its own.

What follows also is from the life:

> Sadly at night
> I sat me down beside a stranger's hearth,
> And when the lingering hour of rest was come,
> First wet with tears my pillow.

One of my earliest extant poems (the Retrospect) describes this school, and a visit which I made to it, after it had ceased to be one, in the year 1793. You have it, as it was originally written at that time, in the volume which I published with Robert Lovell, and as corrected for preservation, in the collection of my Minor Poems. The house had been the mansion of some decayed family, whose history I should like to trace if Collinson's Somersetshire were to fall in my way. There were vestiges of former respectability and comfort about it, which, young as I was, impressed me in the same manner that such things would do now — walled gardens, summer-houses, gate-pillars, surmounted with huge stone balls, a paddock, a large orchard, walnut trees, yards, outhouses upon an opulent scale. I felt how mournful all this was in its fallen state, when the great walled garden was converted into a playground for the boys, the gateways broken, the summer-houses falling to ruin, and grass growing in the interstices of the lozenged pavement of the fore-court. The features within I do not so distinctly remember, not being so well able to understand their symbols of better days; only I recollect a black oaken staircase from the hall, and that the school-room was hung with faded tapestry, behind which we used to have our hoards of crabs.

Here one year of my life was past with little profit, and with a good deal of suffering. There could not be a worse school in all respects. Thomas Flower, the master, was a remarkable man, worthy of a better station in life, but utterly unfit for that in which he was placed. His whole delight was in mathematics and astronomy, and he had constructed an orrery upon so large a scale that it filled a room. What a misery it must have been for such a man to teach a set of stupid boys, year after year, the rudiments of arithmetic. And a misery he seemed to feel it. When he came into his desk, even there he was thinking of the stars, and looked as if he were out of humour, not from ill-nature, but because his calculations were interrupted. But for the most part he left the school to the care of his son Charley, a person who was always called by that familiar diminutive, and whose consequence you may appreciate accordingly. Writing and arithmetic were all they professed to teach; but twice in the week a Frenchman came from Bristol to instruct in Latin the small number of boys who learnt it, of whom I was one. Duplanier was his name. He returned to France at the commencement of the Revolution, and a report obtained credit at Bristol, and got into the newspapers, that, having resumed his proper name, which for some reason or other he had thought fit to conceal in England, he went into the army, and became no less a personage than General Menou, of Egyptian notoriety. For Duplanier's sake, who was a very good-natured man, I am glad the story was disproved.

That sort of ornamental penmanship which now I

fear has wholly gone out of use, was taught there. The father, as well as Charley, excelled in it. They could adorn the heading of a rule in arithmetic in a cyphering-book, or the bottom of a page, not merely with common flourishing, but with an angel, a serpent, a fish, or a pen, formed with an ease and freedom of hand which was to me a great object of admiration; but, unluckily, I was too young to acquire the art. I have seen, in the course of my life, two historical pieces produced in this manner; worthy of remembrance they are, as notable specimens of whimsical dexterity. One was David killing Goliah; it was in a broker's shop at Bristol, and I would have bought it if I could have afforded at that time to expend some ten shillings upon it. The other was a portrait of king Joam V. on horseback, in the bishop's palace at Beja. They taught the beautiful Italian, or lady's hand, used in the age of our parents; engrossing (which, I suppose, was devised to insure distinctness and legibility); and some varieties of German text, worthy for their square, massy, antique forms to have figured in an antiquarian's titlepage.

Twice during the twelve months of my stay great interest was excited throughout the commonwealth by a grand spelling-match, for which poor Flower deserves some credit, if it was a device of his own to save himself trouble and amuse the boys. Two of the biggest boys chose their party, boy by boy alternately, till the whole school was divided between them. They then hunted the dictionary for words unusual enough in their orthography to puzzle ill-taught lads; and having compared lists, that the same

word might not be chosen by both, two words were delivered to every boy, and kept by him profoundly secret from all on the other side till the time of trial. On a day appointed we were drawn up in battle array, quite as anxious on the occasion as the members of a cricket-club for the result of a grand match against all England. Ambition, that "last infirmity of noble minds," had its full share in producing this anxiety; and to increase the excitement, each person had wagered a halfpenny upon the event. The words were given out in due succession on each side, from the biggest to the least; and for every one which was spelt rightly in its progress down the enemy's ranks, the enemy scored one; or one was scored on the other side, if the word ran the gauntlet safely. The party in which I was engaged lost one of these matches and won the other. I remember that my words for one of them were Chrystalization and Coterie, and that I was one of the most effective persons in the contest, which might easily be.

Charley and his father frequently saved themselves some trouble, by putting me to teach bigger boys than myself. I got on with Latin here more by assisting others in their lessons than by my own, when the master came so seldom. This assistance was not voluntary on my part; it was a tax levied upon me by the law of the strongest, a law which prevails as much in schools as it did in the cabinets of Louis XIV. and the emperor Napoleon, and does in that of the United States of America; but the effect was, that I made as much progress as if my lessons had been daily. At Mr. Foote's I read Cordery

and Erasmus, each with a translation in a parallel column, which was doubled down at lesson time. Here I got into Phædrus without a translation, but with the help of an *ordo verborum*, indicated by figures in the margin. But I am at the end of my paper and the slip beside me has items enough concerning Corston for another letter.

LETTER VIII.

RECOLLECTIONS OF CORSTON CONTINUED.

December 28th, 1821.

I REMEMBER poor Flower with compassion, and not without respect, as a man who, under more auspicious circumstances, might have passed his life happily for himself, and perhaps honourably as well as usefully for his country. His attainments and talents were, I have no doubt, very considerable in their kind; and I am sure that his temper and disposition were naturally good. I never saw so little punishment in any school. There was but one flogging during my stay there; it was for running away, which was considered the heaviest of all offences. The exhibition was then made as serious as possible; the instrument was a scourge of packthread instead of a rod. But though punishments in private schools were at that time, I believe, always much more severe than in public ones, I do not remember that this was remarkable for severity. We stood in awe and respect of him rather than fear. If there was nothing conciliating or indulgent about him, there was no rigour

or ill-nature; but his manner was what you might expect to find in one who was habitually thoughtful, and who, when not engaged in abstruse studies, had reason enough for unhappiness, because of his domestic circumstances. His school was declining. He was about fifty years of age; and having lost his first wife, had married one of his maids, who took to drinking; the house, therefore, was in disorder; the servants were allowed to take their own course, and the boys were sadly neglected. In every thing which relates to personal cleanliness, they were left to the care of themselves. I had a profusion of curly hair: just before the holydays, it was thought proper to examine into the state of its population, which was found to be prodigiously great; my head, therefore, was plastered with soap, and in that condition I was sent home, with such sores in consequence of long neglect, that my mother wept at seeing them.

Our morning ablutions, to the entire saving of all materials, were performed in a little stream which ran through the barton, and in its ordinary state was hardly more than ankle deep. We had porridge for breakfast in winter, bread and milk in summer. My taste was better than my appetite; the green leeks in this uncleanly broth gave me a dislike to that plant, which I retain to this day (St. David forgive me!), and if it were swimming with fat, as it usually was, I could better fast till the hour of dinner than do violence to my stomach by forcing down the greasy and offensive mixture. The bread and milk reminds me of an anecdote connected with the fashion of those days. Because I was indulged with

sugar in my bread and milk at home, when I went to school I was provided with a store carefully secured in paper. I had a cocked hat for Sundays; during the rest of the week it lay in my box upon the top of my clothes, and when the paper of brown sugar was reduced in bulk, I deposited it in the cock of the hat. As you may suppose, my fingers found their way there whenever I went to the box, and the box was sometimes opened for that purpose; thus the sugar was by little and little strewn over the hat. It was in a sweet clammy condition the first time I was sent for from school by my Aunt Tyler, to visit her at Bath; and as the cocked hat was then in the last and lowest stage of its fashion, mine was dismissed to be rounded by the hatter, and I never wore one again till I was at Madrid, where round hats were prohibited.

One day in the week we had bread and cheese for dinner; or, when baking day came round, a hot cake, with cheese or a small portion of butter at our choice. This, to my liking, was the best dinner in the week. Some of the boys would split their cake, lay the cheese in thin layers between the halves, and then place it under a screw-press, so as to compress it into one mass. This rule of going without meat one day in the week was then, I believe, general in the country schools, and is still practised in many, retained perhaps, for motives of frugality, from Catholic times; and yet, so stupid is popular obstinacy, fish, even where it is most plentiful, is never used. One of the servants had the privilege of selling gingerbread and such things. We had bread and cheese for supper, and

were permitted to raise salads for this meal, in little portions of ground, into which what had been in better times the flower-border of the great pleasure-garden was divided: these portions were our property, and transferable by sale. We raised mustard and cress, radishes and lettuce. When autumn came, we had no lack of apples, for it is a country of orchards. The brook which has already been mentioned, passed through one immediately before it entered the barton where our ablutions were performed; the trees on one side grew on a steepish declivity, and in stormy weather we constructed dams across the stream to stop the apples which were brought down. Our master had an extensive orchard of his own, and employed the boys to gather in the fruit: there was, of course, free license to eat on that day, and a moderate share of pocketings would have been tolerated; but whether original sin was particularly excited by that particular fruit or not, so it was that a subtraction was made enormous enough to make inquiry unavoidable; the boxes were searched in consequence, and the whole plunder was thus recovered. The boys were employed also to *squail* at the *bannets*, that is, being interpreted, to throw at his walnuts when it was time to bring them down; there were four or five fine trees on the hill-side above the brook, I was too little to bear a part in this, which required considerable strength; but for many days afterwards, I had the gleaning among the leaves and broken twigs with which the ground was covered; and the fragrance of those leaves, in their incipient decay, is one of those odours which I can recall at will, and which, when-

ever it occurs, brings with it the vivid remembrance of past times.

One very odd amusement, which I never saw or heard of elsewhere, was greatly in vogue at this school. It was performed with snail shells, by placing them against each other, point to point, and pressing till the one was broken in, or sometimes both. This was called conquering; and the shell which remained unhurt, acquired esteem and value in proportion to the number over which it had triumphed, an accurate account being kept. A great conqueror was prodigiously prized and coveted, so much so indeed, that two of this description would seldom have been brought to contest the palm, if both possessors had not been goaded to it by reproaches and taunts. The victor had the number of its opponents added to its own; thus when one conqueror of fifty conquered another which had been as often victorious, it became conqueror of an hundred and one. Yet even in this, reputation was sometimes obtained upon false pretences. I found a boy one day, who had fallen in with a great number of young snails, so recently hatched that the shells were still transparent, and he was besmearing his fingers by crushing these poor creatures one after another against his conqueror, counting away with the greatest satisfaction at his work. He was a good-natured boy, so that I, who had been bred up to have a sense of humanity, ventured to express some compassion for the snails, and to suggest that he might as well count them and lay them aside unhurt. He hesitated, and seemed inclined to assent till it struck him as a point of honour, or of conscience, and

then he resolutely said, no! that would not do, for he could not then fairly say he had conquered them. There is a surprising difference of strength in these shells, and that not depending upon the size or species; I mean, whether yellow, brown, or striped. It might partly be estimated by the appearance of the point, or top (I do not know what better term to use): the strong ones were usually clear and glossy there, and white if the shell were of the large, coarse, mottled brown kind. The top was then said to be petrified; and a good conqueror of this description would triumph for weeks or months. I remember that one of the greatest heroes bore evident marks of having once been conquered. It had been thrown away in some lucky situation, where the poor tenant had leisure to repair his habitation, or rather where the restorative power of nature repaired it for him, and the wall was thus made stronger than it had been before the breach, by an arch of new masonry below. But in general I should think the resisting power of the shell depended upon the geometrical nicety of its form.

One of the big boys one day brought down a kite with an arrow, from the play-ground: this I think a more extraordinary feat than Apollo's killing Python, though a Belvidere Jack Steel (this was the archer's name) would not make quite so heroic a statue. We had a boy there who wore midshipman's uniform, and whose pay must have more than maintained him at school; his father was a purser, and such things were not uncommon in those days. While I was at this school, the corporation of Bristol invited Rodney from Bath to a public dinner, after his great

victory; and we, to do him honour in our way, were all marched down to the Globe at Newton, by the road side, that we might see him pass, and give him three cheers. They were heartily given, and were returned with great good humour from the carriage window. Another circumstance has made me remember the day well. Looking about for conquerors in Newton churchyard before we returned to school, I saw a slow-worm get into the ground under a tombstone; and in consequence, when I met no long time afterwards with the ancient opinion that the spinal marrow of a human body generates a serpent, this fact induced me long to believe it without hesitation, upon the supposed testimony of my own eyes.

Though I had a full share of discomfort at Corston, I recollect nothing there so painful as that of being kept up every night till a certain hour, when I was dying with sleepiness. Sometimes I stole away to bed; but it was not easy to do this, and I found that it was not desirable, because the other boys played tricks upon me when they came. But I dreaded nothing so much as Sunday evening in winter: we were then assembled in the hall, to hear the master read a sermon, or a portion of Stackhouse's History of the Bible. Here I sat at the end of a long form, in sight but not within feeling of the fire, my feet cold, my eyelids heavy as lead, and yet not daring to close them, kept awake by fear alone, in total inaction, and under the operation of a lecture more soporific than the strongest sleeping dose. Heaven help the wits of those good people who think that children are to be edified by having sermons read to them!

After remaining there about twelve months, I was sent for home, upon an alarm that the itch had broken out among us. Some of the boys communicated this advice to their parents in letters which Duplanien conveyed for them; all others, of course, being dictated and written under inspection. The report, whether true or false, accelerated the ruin of the school. A scandalous scene took place, of mutual reproaches between father and son, each accusing the other for that neglect the consequences of which were now become apparent.

The dispute was renewed with more violence after the boys were in bed. The next morning the master was not to be seen; Charley appeared with a black eye, and we knew that father and son had come to blows! Most, if not all, the Bristol boys were now taken away, and I among them, to my great joy. But on my arrival at home I was treated as a suspected person, and underwent a three days' purgatory in brimstone.

LETTER IX.

RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE AT BEDMINSTER. —LOVE FOR BOTANY AND ENTOMOLOGY.

July, 1822.

THE year which I passed at Corston had been a mournful one for my mother. She lost my sweet little sister Louisa during that time; and being after a while persuaded to accompany Miss Tyler to London, where she had never before been, they were recalled

by the tidings of my grandmother's sudden death. Miss Tyler had found it expedient to break up her establishment at Bath, and pass some time in visiting among her friends. She now took up her abode at Bedminster, till family affairs should be settled; and till she could determine where and how to fix herself. Thither also I was sent, while my father was looking out for another school at which to place me.

I have so many vivid feelings connected with this house at Bedminster, that if it had not been in a vile neighbourhood, I believe my heart would have been set upon purchasing it, and fixing my abode there where the happiest days of my childhood were spent. My grandfather built it (about the year 1740, I suppose), and had made it what was then thought a thoroughly commodious and good house for one in his rank of life. It stood in a lane, some two or three hundred yards from the great western road. You ascended by several semicircular steps into what was called the fore court, but was in fact a flower-garden, with a broad pavement from the gate to the porch. That porch was in great part lined, as well as covered, with white jessamine; and many a time have I sat there with my poor sisters, threading the fallen blossoms upon grass stalks. It opened into a little hall, paved with diamond-shaped flags. On the right hand was the parlour, which had a brown or black boarded floor, covered with a Lisbon mat, and a handsome timepiece over the fireplace; on the left was the best kitchen, in which the family lived. The best kitchen is an apartment that belongs to other days, and is now no longer to be seen, except in

houses which, having remained unaltered for the last half century, are inhabited by persons a degree lower in society than their former possessors. The one which I am now calling to mind after an interval of more than forty years, was a cheerful room, with an air of such country comfort about it, that my little heart was always gladdened when I entered it during my grandmother's life. It had a stone floor, which I believe was the chief distinction between a best kitchen and a parlour. The furniture consisted of a clock, a large oval oak table with two flaps (over which two or three fowling-pieces had their place), a round tea-table of cherry wood, Windsor chairs of the same, and two large armed ones of that easy make (of all makes it is the easiest), in one of which my grandmother always sat. On one side of the fireplace the china was displayed in a buffet — that is, a cupboard with glass doors; on the other were closets for articles less ornamental, but more in use. The room was wainscotted and ornamented with some old maps, and with a long looking-glass over the chimney-piece, and a tall one between the windows, both in white frames. The windows opened into the fore-court, and were as cheerful and fragrant in the season of flowers as roses and jessamine, which grew luxuriantly without, could make them. There was a passage between this apartment and the kitchen, long enough to admit of a large airy pantry, and a larder on the left hand, the windows of both opening into the barton, as did those of the kitchen; on the right was a door into the back court. There was a rack in the kitchen

well furnished with bacon, and a mistletoe bush always suspended from the middle of the ceiling.

The green room, which was my uncle Edward's, was over the parlour. Over the hall was a smaller apartment, which had been my grandfather's office, and still contained his desk and his pigeon-holes: I remember it well, and the large-patterned, dark, flock paper, with its faded ground. The yellow room, over the best kitchen, was the visitor's chamber; and this my mother occupied whenever she slept there. There was no way to my grandmother's, the blue room over the kitchen, but through this and an intervening passage, where, on the left, was a store-room. The blue room had a thorough light, one window looking into the barton, the other into the back court. The squire slept in the garret; his room was on one side, the servants' on the other: and there was a large open space between, at the top of the stairs, used for lumber and stores.

A door from the hall, opposite to the entrance, opened upon the cellar stairs, to which there was another door from the back court. This was a square, having the house on two sides, the washhouse and brewhouse on the third, and walled on the fourth. A vine covered one side of the house here, and grew round my grandmother's window, out of which I have often reached the grapes. Here also was the pigeon-house, and the pump, under which the fatal dipping * was performed. The yard or barton was of considerable size; the entrance to it was from the lane, through large folding-gates, with a horse-chest-

* See page 28.

nut on each side. And here another building fronted you, as large as the house, containing the dairy and laundry, both large and excellent in their kind, seed-rooms, stable, haylofts, &c. The front of this out-house was almost clothed with yew, clipt to the shape of the windows. Opposite the one gable-end were the coal and stick houses; and on the left side of the barton was a shed for the cart, and while my grand-father lived, for an open carriage, which after his death was no longer kept. Here too was the horse-block, beautifully overhung with ivy, from an old wall against which it was placed. The other gable-end was covered with fruit trees, and at the bottom was a raised camomile bed.

An old-fashioned bird's eye view, half picture, half plan, would explain all this more intelligibly than my description can do; and if I possessed the skill, I should delight in tracing one—my memory would accurately serve. If I have made myself understood, you will perceive that the back court formed a square with the house. Behind both was a piece of waste ground, left for the passage of carts from the barton to the orchard, but considerably wider than was necessary for that purpose. It was neatly kept in grass, with a good wide path from the court to the kitchen-garden. This was large, excellently stocked, and kept in admirable order by my uncle Edward. It was enclosed from the waste ground by a wall about breast-high, surmounted with white rails till it joined the outhouses. The back of these was covered with pear and plum trees—the green gages I remember were remarkably fine of their kind. One

side was walled, and well clothed with cherry, peach, and nectarine trees; the opposite one was separated by a hedge from the lane leading to the orchard, from which the garden was divided at the bottom. I have called it a kitchen-garden, because that name was given it; but it was ornamental as well as useful, with grass walks, espaliers, and a profusion of fine flowers. The side of the house in the fore court also was covered with an apricot-tree; so that every luxury of this kind which an English sun can ripen, was there in abundance. Just by the orchard gate was a fine barberry-bush; and that peculiar odour of its blossoms, which is supposed to injure the wheat within its reach, is still fresh in my remembrance. Wordsworth has no sense of smell. Once, and once only in his life, the dormant power awakened; it was by a bed of stocks in full bloom, at a house which he inhabited in Dorsetshire, some five and twenty years ago; and he says it was like a vision of Paradise to him: but it lasted only a few minutes, and the faculty has continued torpid from that time. The fact is remarkable in itself, and would be worthy of notice, even if it did not relate to a man of whom posterity will desire to know all that can be remembered. He has often expressed to me his regret for this privation. I, on the contrary, possess the sense in such acuteness, that I can remember an odour and call up the ghost of one that is departed. But I must return to the barberry-bush. It stood at the entrance of a potato garden, which had been taken from the orchard. The orchard was still of considerable size. At the bottom was a broad wet ditch,

with a little drawbridge over it leading into the fields, through which was the pleasantest way to church and to Bristol. It was just one mile to the church, and two to my father's house in Wine Street.

It was very seldom indeed, that my grandmother went to Bristol. I scarcely recollect ever to have seen her there. The extent of her walks was to church, which she never missed, unless the weather absolutely confined her to the house. She was not able to attend the evening service also, on account of the distance; but in the morning she was constant, and always in good time; for if she were not there before the absolution, she used to say that she might as well have remained at home. At other times she rarely went out of her own premises. Neighbours of her own rank there were none within her reach; her husband's acquaintance had mostly died off, and she had made no new ones since his death. Her greatest happiness was to have my mother there with some of the young fry; and we, on our part, had no pleasure so great as that of a visit to Bedminster. It was, indeed, for my mother, as well as for us, an advantage beyond all price to have this quiet country home at so easy a distance, abounding as it did with all country comforts. Bedminster itself was an ugly, dirty, poor, populous village, many of the inhabitants being colliers. But the coal pits were in a different part of the parish, and the house was at a sufficient distance from all annoyances. If there was no beauty of situation, there was complete retirement, and perfect comfort. The view was merely to a field and cottage on the other side the lane, on a

rising ground belonging to the property. But the little world within was our own. And to me it was quite a different world from that in which I lived at other times. My father's house was in one of the busiest and noisiest streets of Bristol, and of course had no outlets. At Bath I was under perpetual restraint. But here I had all wholesome liberty, all wholesome indulgence, all wholesome enjoyments; and the delight which I there learnt to take in rural sights and sounds, has grown up with me and continues unabated to this day.

My chief amusement was in the garden, where I found endless entertainment in the flowers and in observing insects. I had little propensity to any boyish sports, and less expertness in them. My uncles Edward and William used to reproach me with this sometimes, saying they never saw such a boy. One schoolboy's art, however, they taught me, which I have never read of, nor seen practised elsewhere; it was that of converting a marble into a black witch, and thereby making it lucky. You know that if a marble be put in the fire, it makes a good detonating ball. I have sacrificed many a one so, to frighten the cook. But if the marble be wrapt up in brown paper (perhaps any paper may answer the purpose as well) with some suet or dripping round about it, it will not explode while the fat is burning, and when you take it out of the grate it is as black as jet.

But if I was unapt at ordinary sports, a botanist or entomologist would have found me a willing pupil in those years; and if I had fallen in with one, I might perhaps, at this very day, have been classifying

mosses, and writing upon the natural history of snails or cockchafers, instead of recording the events of the Peninsular War. I knew every variety of grass blossom that the fields produced, and in what situations to look for each. I discovered that snails seal themselves up in their shells during the winter; and that ants make their way into the cockchafer through an aperture in the breast, and eat out its inside while it is yet alive. This gave me a great dislike to the ants, which even the delightful papers about them in the Guardian did not overcome. Two curious facts concerning these insects, which fell under my own observation in those days, are worthy of being noted. They spoilt the produce of some of our best currant trees one year. The trees were trained against a wall, the ants walked over them continually and in great numbers (I cannot tell why, but probably after the *aphides*, which, as Kirby and Spence tell us, they regularly *milk*), and thus they imparted so rank a smell to the fruit that it could not be eaten. The ants were very numerous that season, and this occasioned a just and necessary war upon them. They had made a high-way through the porch, along the interstices of the flagstones. The right of path, as you may suppose, was not acquiesced in; and when this road was as full as Cheapside at noonday, boiling water was poured upon it. The bodies, however, all disappeared in a few hours, carried away, as we supposed, by their comrades. But we know that some insects are marvellously retentive of life; and this circumstance has sometimes tempted me to suspect that an ant may derive no more injury from being boiled, than a fly

from being bottled in Madeira, or a snail from having its head cut off, or from lying seven years in a collector's cabinet. Of the latter fact (which was already authenticated) my neighbour, Mr. Fryer of Ormathwaite, had proof the other day.

There are three flowers which, to this day, always remind me of Bedminster. The Syringa or Roman Jessamine, which covered an arbour in the fore court, and another at the bottom of the kitchen-garden; the everlasting pea, which grew most luxuriantly under the best kitchen windows; and the evening primrose: my grandmother loved to watch the opening of this singularly delicate flower — a flower, indeed, which in purity and delicacy seems to me to exceed all others. She called it mortality, because these beauties pass away so soon, and because in the briefness of its continuance (living only for a night) it reminded her of human life.

The house was sold after her death, as soon as a purchaser could be found, there being no longer the means for supporting it. The reversion of her jointure had long ago been sold by John Tyler. The house was Edward's property, he having bought it when he came of age. Her loss was deeply felt by him and the poor Squire: and indeed it was fatal to their happiness; for happy hitherto they had been, according to their own sense of enjoyment. In losing her they lost everything. The Squire was sent to board in a village on the coast of the Bristol Channel, called Worle; and Edward Tyler, who was very capable of business, took a clerk's place in Bristol. But their stay was gone; and eventually, I have

no doubt, both their lives were shortened by the consequences.

I went to look at the place, some twenty years ago; it was a good deal altered — bow windows had been thrown out in the front, and a gazebo erected in the roof. After viewing about the front as much as I could without being noticed and deemed impertinent, I made my way round into the fields, and saw that the drawbridge was still in existence. I have seen the gazebo since, from the window of a stage coach; and this is probably the last view I shall ever have of a place so dear to me. Even the recollections of it will soon be confined to my own breast; for my uncle and my aunt Mary are now the only living persons who partake them.

LETTER X.

IS PLACED AS A DAY-BOARDER AT A SCHOOL IN BRISTOL. — EARLY EFFORT IN AUTHORSHIP. — LOVE FOR DRAMATIC AUTHORS. — MISS PALMER. — SCHOOL RECOLLECTIONS. — OPINION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATION.

January 10th, 1823.

I WAS now placed as a day-boarder at a school in that part of Bristol called the Fort, on the hill above St. Michael's Church. William Williams, the master, was, as his name denotes, a Welshman. I find him satirized, or to use a more accurate word, slandered, in the Miscellanies of my uncle's old master Emanuel Collins, as an impudent pretender. This he certainly was not; for he pretended to very little, and what he

professed to teach he taught well. The Latin he left wholly to an usher, Bevan by name, who was curate of the parish. The writing, cyphering, and merchant's accounts he superintended himself, though there was a writing-master who made and mended the pens, ruled the copy-books, and examined the slates. Williams was an author of the very humblest class; he had composed a spelling-book solely for the consumption of his own school: it was never published and had not even a titlepage. For love of this spelling-book he exercised the boys in it so much, that the thumbing and dog-leaving turned to good account. But he was, I verily believe, conscientiously earnest in making them perfect in the Catechism; the examination in this was always dreaded as the most formidable duty of the school, — such was the accuracy which he exacted, and the severity of his manner on that occasion. The slightest inattention was treated as a crime.

My grandmother died in 1782, and either in the latter end of that year, or the ensuing January, I was placed at poor old Williams's, whom, as that expression indicates, I remember with feelings of good will. I had commenced poet before this, at how early an age I cannot call to mind; but I very well recollect that my first composition, both in manner and sentiment, might have been deemed a very hopeful imitation of the Bellman's verses. The discovery, however, that I could write rhymes gave me great pleasure, which was in no slight degree heightened when I perceived that my mother was not only pleased with what I had produced,

but proud of it. Miss Tyler had intended, as far as she was concerned, to give me a systematic education, and for this purpose (as she afterwards told me) purchased a translation of Rousseau's Emilius. That system being happily even more impracticable than Mr. Edgeworth's, I was lucky enough to escape from any experiment of this kind, and there good fortune provided for me better than any method could have done. Nothing could be more propitious for me, considering my aptitudes and tendency of mind, than Miss Tyler's predilection, I might almost call it passion, for the theatre. Owing to this, Shakespere was in my hands as soon as I could read; and it was long before I had any other knowledge of the history of England than what I gathered from his plays. Indeed, when first I read the plain matter of fact, the difference which appeared then puzzled and did not please me; and for some time I preferred Shakespere's authority to the historian's.

It is curious that "Titus Andronicus" was at first my favourite play; partly, I suppose, because there was nothing in the characters above my comprehension; but the chief reason must have been that tales of horror make a deep impression upon children, as they do upon the vulgar, for whom, as their ballads prove, no tragedy can be too bloody—they excite astonishment rather than pity. I went through Beaumont and Fletcher also, before I was eight years old; circumstances enable me to recollect the time accurately. Beaumont and Fletcher were great theatrical names, and therefore there was no scruple about letting me peruse their works. What harm, indeed, could they do

me at that age? I read them merely for the interest which the stories afforded, and understood the worse parts as little as I did the better. But I acquired imperceptibly from such reading familiarity with the diction, and ear for the blank verse of our great masters. In general I gave myself no trouble with what I did not understand; the story was intelligible, and that was enough. But the knight of the Burning Pestle perplexed me terribly; burlesque of this kind is the last thing that a child can comprehend. It set me longing, however, for Palmerin of England, and that longing was never gratified till I read it in the original Portuguese. My favourite play upon the stage was "Cymbeline," and next to that "As you like it." They are both romantic dramas; and no one had ever a more decided turn for music or for numbers, than I had for romance.

You will wonder that this education should not have made me a dramatic writer. I had seen more plays before I was seven years old than I have ever since I was twenty, and heard more conversation about the theatre than any other subject. Miss Tyler had given up her house at Walcot before I went to Corston; and when I visited her from school, she was herself a guest with Miss Palmer and her sister Mrs. Bartlett, whose property was vested in the Bath and Bristol theatres. Their house was in Galloway's Buildings, from whence a covered passage led to the playhouse, and they very rarely missed a night's performance. I was too old to be put to bed before the performance began, and it was better that I should be taken than left with the servants; therefore I was always of the

party; and it is impossible to describe the thorough delight which I received from this habitual indulgence. No after enjoyment could equal or approach it; I was sensible of no defects either in the dramas or in the representation: better acting indeed could nowhere have been found; Mrs. Siddons was the heroine, Dimond and Murray would have done credit to any stage, and among the comic actors were Edwin and Blanchard—and Blisset, who, though never known to a London audience, was, of all comic actors whom I have ever seen, the most perfect. But I was happily insensible to that difference between good and bad acting which, in riper years, takes off so much from the pleasure of dramatic representation; every thing answered the height of my expectations and desires. And I saw it in perfect comfort, in a small theatre, from the front row of a box, not too far from the centre. The Bath theatre was said to be the most comfortable in England; and no expense was spared in the scenery and decorations.

My aunt, who hoarded every thing, except money, preserved the play-bills, and had a collection of them which Dr. Burney might have envied. As she rarely or never suffered me to be out of doors, lest I should dirt my clothes, these play-bills were one of the substitutes devised for my amusement instead of healthy and natural sports. I was encouraged to prick them with a pin, letter by letter: and for want of any thing better, became as fond of this employment as women sometimes are of netting or any ornamental work. I learnt to do it with great precision, pricking the larger types by their outline, so

that when they were held up to the window they were bordered with spots of light. The object was to illuminate the whole bill in this manner. I have done it to hundreds; and yet I can well remember the sort of dissatisfied and damping feeling, which the sight of one of these bills would give me, a day or two after it had been finished and laid by. It was like an illumination when half the lamps are gone out. This amusement gave my writing-masters no little trouble; for, in spite of all their lessons, I held a pen as I had been used to hold the pin.

Miss Tyler was considered as an amateur and patroness of the stage. She was well acquainted with Henderson, but of him I have no recollection. He left Bath, I believe, just as my play-going days began. Edwin, I remember, gave me an ivory windmill, when I was about four years old; and there was no family with which she was more intimate than Dimond's. She was thrown also into the company of dramatic writers at Mr. Palmer's, who resided then about a mile from Bath, on the Upper Bristol Road, at a house called West Hall. Here she became acquainted with Coleman and Sheridan, and Cumberland and Holcroft: but I did not see any of them in those years; and the two former, indeed, never. Sophia Lee was Mrs. Palmer's most intimate friend; she was then in high reputation for the first volume of the Recess, and for the Chapter of Accidents. You will not wonder, that hearing, as I continually did, of living authors, and seeing in what estimation they were held, I formed a great notion of the dignity attached to their profession. Perhaps in no other

circle could this effect so surely have been produced as in a dramatic one, where ephemeral productions excite an intense interest while they last. Superior as I thought actors to all other men, it was not long before I perceived that authors were still a higher class.

Though I have not become a dramatist, my earliest dreams of authorship were, as might be anticipated, from such circumstances, of a dramatic form, and the notion which I had formed of dramatic composition was not inaccurate. "It is the easiest thing in the world to write a play!" said I to Miss Palmer, as we were in a carriage on Redcliffe Hill one day, returning from Bristol to Bedminster. "Is it, my dear?" was her reply. "Yes," I continued, "for you know you have only to think what you would say if you were in the place of the characters, and to make them say it." This brings to mind some unlucky illustrations which I made use of about the same time to the same lady, with the view of enforcing what I conceived to be good and considerate advice. Miss Palmer was on a visit to my aunt at Bedminster; they had fallen out, as they sometimes would do; these bickerings produced a fit of sullenness in the former, which was not shaken off for some days; and while it lasted, she usually sat with her apron over her face. I really thought she would injure her eyes by this, and told her so in great kindness; "for you know, Miss Palmer," said I, "that every thing gets out of order if it is not used. A book, if it is not opened, will become damp and mouldy; and a key, if it is never turned in the lock, gets rusty." Just then my aunt entered the room.

"Lord, Miss Tyler!" said the offended lady, "what do you think this child has been saying? He has been comparing my eyes to a rusty key and a mouldy book." The speech, however, was not without some good effect, for it restored good humour. Miss Palmer was an odd woman with a kind heart; one of those persons who are not respected so much as they deserve, because their dispositions are better than their understanding. She had a most generous and devoted attachment to Miss Tyler, which was not always requited as it ought to have been. The earliest dream which I can remember, related to her; it was singular enough to impress itself indelibly upon my memory. I thought I was sitting with her in her drawing-room (chairs, carpet, and everything are now visibly present to my mind's eye) when the devil was introduced as a morning visitor. Such an appearance, for he was in his full costume of horns, black bat-wings, tail, and cloven feet, put me in ghostly and bodily fear; but she received him with perfect politeness, called him dear Mr. Devil, desired the servant to put him a chair, and expressed her delight at being favoured with a call.

There was much more promise implied in my notion of how a play ought to be written, than would have been found in any of my attempts. The first subject which I tried was the continence of Scipio, suggested by a print in a pocket-book. Battles were introduced in abundance; because the battle in Cymbeline was one of my favourite scenes; and because Congreve's hero in the Mourning Bride, finds the writing of his father in prison, I made my prince of Numantia find

pen, ink, and paper, that he might write to his mistress. An act and a half of this nonsense exhausted my perseverance. Another story ran for a long time in my head, and I had planned the characters to suit the actors on the Bath stage. The fable was taken from a collection of tales, every circumstance of which has completely faded from my recollection, except that the scene of the story in question was laid in Italy, and the time, I think, about Justinian's reign. The book must have been at least thirty or forty years old then, and I should recognise it if it ever fell in my way. While this dramatic passion continued, I wished my friends to partake it; and soon after I went to Williams's school, persuaded one of my school-fellows to write a tragedy. Ballard was his name, the son of a surgeon at Portbury, a good-natured fellow, with a round face which I have not seen for seven or eight-and-thirty years, and yet fancy that I could recognise it now, and should be right glad to see it. He liked the suggestion, and agreed to it very readily, but he could not tell what to write about. I gave him a story. But then another difficulty was discovered; he could not devise names for the personages of the drama. I gave him a most heroic assortment of *propria quæ maribus et fœminis.* He had now got his *Dramatis Personæ,* but he could not tell what to make them say, and then I gave up the business. I made the same attempt with another schoolfellow, and with no better success. It seemed to me very odd, that they should not be able to write plays as well as to do their lessons. It is needless to say that both

these friends were of my own age; this is always the condition of school intimacies. The subject of the second experiment was a boy whose appearance prepossessed everybody. My mother was so taken with the gentleness of his manners, and the regularity and mildness of his features, that she was very desirous I should become intimate with him. He grew up to be a puppy, sported a tail when he was fifteen, and at five-and-twenty was an insignificant withered *homunculus*, with a white face shrivelled into an expression of effeminate peevishness. I have seen many instances wherein the promise of the boy has not been fulfilled by the man, but never so striking a case of blight as this.

The school was better than Flower's, inasmuch as I had a Latin lesson every day, instead of thrice a week. But my lessons were solitary ones, so few boys were there in my station, and indeed in the station of life next above mine, who received a classical education in those days, compared with what is the case now. Writing and arithmetic, with at most a little French, were thought sufficient, at that time, for the sons of opulent Bristol merchants. I was in Phædrus when I went there; and proceeded through Cornelius Nepos, Justin, and the Metamorphoses. One lesson in the morning was all. The rest of the time was given to what was deemed there of more importance. Writing was taught very differently at this school from what it was at Corston, and much less agreeably to my inclinations. We did copies of capital letters there, and were encouraged to aspire at the ornamental parts of penmanship. But Williams who wrote a slow strong hand himself, admirable of its kind, put

me back to the rudiments at once, and kept me at strokes, pothooks and hangers, *us*, *ns*, and *m*, and such words as *pupil* and *tulip*, Heaven knows how long, with absurd and wearisome perseverance. Writing was the only thing in which any pains were ever taken, or any method observed, to ground me thoroughly, and I was universally pronounced a most unpromising pupil. No instruction ever could teach me to hold the pen properly; of course, therefore, I could make none of those full free strokes which were deemed essential to good writing, and this drew upon me a great deal of unavailing reproof, though not severity, for old Williams liked me on the whole; and Mr. Foote was the only preceptor (except a dancing-master), who ever laid hands on me in anger. At home, too, my father and my uncle Thomas used to shake their heads at me, and pronounce that I should never write a decent hand. My cyphering-book, however, made some amends, in my master's eyes. It was in this that his pains and the proficiency of his scholars were to be shewn. The books he used to sew himself, half a dozen sheets folded into the common quarto size; they were ruled with double red lines, and the lines which were required in the sums were also doubled ruled with red ink. When the book was filled, the pencil lines were carefully rubbed out; and Williams, tearing off the covers, deposited it in an envelope of fine cartridge paper, on which he had written, in his best hand, the boy's name to whom it belonged. When there were enough of these to form a volume, they were consigned to a poor old man, the inhabitant of an almshouse, who obtained a few com-

forts beyond what the establishment allowed him, by binding them. Now, though I wrote what is called a stiff cramp hand, there was a neatness and regularity about my books, which were peculiar to them. I had as quick a sense of symmetry as of metre. My lines were always drawn according to some standard of proportion, so that the page had an appearance of order, at first sight. I found the advantage of this when I came to be concerned with proof sheets. The method which I used in my cyphering-book, led me to teach the printers how to print verses of irregular length upon a regular principle: and Ballantyne told me I was the only person he ever met with, who knew how a page would look before it was set up. I may add that it was I who set the fashion for black letter in titlepages and half titles, and that this arose from my admiration of German-text at school.

I remained at this school between four and five years, which, if not profitably, were at least not unhappily spent. And here let me state the deliberate opinion upon the contested subject of public or private education, which I have formed from what I have experienced and heard and observed. A juster estimate of one's self is acquired at school than can be formed in the course of domestic instruction, and what is of much more consequence, a better intuition into the characters of others than there is any chance of learning in after life. I have said that this is of more consequence than one's self-estimate; because the error upon that score which domestic education tends to produce, is on the right

side — that of diffidence and humility. These advantages a day-scholar obtains, and he avoids a great part of the evils which are to be set against them. He cannot, indeed, wholly escape pollution; but he is far less exposed to it than if he were a boarder. He suffers nothing from tyranny, which is carried to excess in schools; nor has he much opportunity of acquiring or indulging malicious and tyrannical propensities himself. Above all, his religious habits, which it is almost impossible to retain at school, are safe. I would gladly send a son to a good school by day; but rather than board him at the best, I would, at whatever inconvenience, educate him myself. What I have said applies to public schools as well as private; of the advantages which the former possess I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

LETTER XI.

MRS. DOLIGNON. — EARLY LOVE FOR BOOKS. — MISS TYLER TAKES A HOUSE IN BRISTOL. — FURTHER RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS UNCLE WILLIAM — HIS DEATH.

January 19th, 1823.

MY home, for the first two years while I went to Williams's school, was at my father's, except that during the holydays I was with Miss Tyler, either when she had lodgings at Bath, or was visiting Miss Palmer there. The first summer holydays I passed with her at Weymouth, whither she was invited to join her friend Mrs. Dolignon.

This lady, whom I remember with the utmost reverence and affection, was a widow with two children, Louisa, who was three or four years older than me, and John, who was just my age. Her maiden name was Delamare, she and her husband being both of refugee race,—an extraction of which I should be far more proud than if my family name were to be found in the Roll of Battle Abbey. I have heard that Mr. Dolignon, in some delirium, died by his own hand, and this perhaps may have broken her spirits, and given a subdued and somewhat pensive manner to one who was naturally among the gentlest, meekest, kindest of human beings. I shall often have to speak of her in these letters. She had known me at Bath in my earliest childhood; I had the good fortune then to obtain a place in her affections, and that place I retained, even when she thought it necessary to estrange me from her family.

Landor, who paints always with the finest touch of truth, whether he is describing external or internal nature, makes his Charoba disappointed at the first sight of the sea:

> "She coldly said, her long-lashed eyes abased,
> 'Is this the mighty ocean?—Is this all?'"

and this he designs as characteristic of a "soul discontented with capacity." When I went on deck in the Corunna packet the first morning, and for the first time found myself out of sight of land, the first feeling was certainly one of disappointment as well as surprise, at seeing myself in the centre of so small a circle. But the impression which the sea made

upon me when I first saw it at Weymouth was very different; probably because not having, like Chicoba, thought of its immensity, I was at once made sensible of it. The sea seen from the shore is still to me the most impressive of all objects, except the starry heavens; and if I could live over any hours of my boyhood again, it should be those which I then spent upon the beach at Weymouth. One delightful day we passed at Portland, and another at Abbotsbury, where one of the few heronries in this kingdom was then existing, and perhaps still may be. There was another at Penshurst, and I have never seen a third. I wondered at nothing so much as the Chesil Bank which connects Portland, like the Firm Island of Amadis, with the mainland, the shingles whereof it is formed gradually diminishing in size from one end to the other, till it becomes a sand-bank. The spot which I recollect with most distinctness is the churchyard of an old church in the island, which, from its neglected state and its situation near the cliffs, above all, perhaps, because so many shipwrecked bodies were interred there, impressed me deeply and durably.

The first book which I ever possessed beyond the size of Mr. Newberry's gilt regiment, was given me soon after this visit by Mrs. Dolignon. It was Hoole's translation of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*. She had heard me speak of it with a delight and interest above my years. My curiosity to read the poem had been strongly excited by the stories of Olendo and Sophronia, and of the Enchanted Forest as versified by Mrs. Rowe. I read them in the volume of her Letters, and despaired at the time of ever reading

more of the poem till I should be a man, from a whimsical notion that as the subject related to Jerusalem, the original must be in Hebrew. No one in my father's house could set me right upon this point; but going one day with my mother into a shop, one side of which was fitted up with a circulating library, containing not more than three or four hundred volumes, almost all novels, I there laid my hand upon Hoole's version, a little before my visit to Weymouth. The copy which Mrs. Dolignon sent me is now in my sight, upon the shelf, and in excellent preservation considering that when a school-boy I perused it so often that I had no small portion of it by heart. Forty years have tarnished the gilding upon its back; but they have not effaced my remembrance of the joy with which I received it, and the delight which I found in its repeated perusal.

During the years that I resided in Wine Street, I was upon a short allowance of books. My father read nothing except Felix Farley's Bristol Journal. A small glass cupboard over the desk in the back parlour held his wine glasses and all his library. It consisted of the Spectator, three or four volumes of the Oxford Magazine, one of the Freeholder's, and one of the Town and Country; these he had taken in during the Wilkes and Liberty epidemic. My brother Tom and I spoilt them by colouring, that is bedaubing, the prints; but I owe to them some knowledge of the political wit, warfare, and scandal of those days; and from one of them that excellent poem the Old Batchelor was cut out, which I reprinted in the Annual Anthology. The other books were

Pomfret's Poems, The Death of Abel, Aaron Hill's translation of Merope, with The Jealous Wife and Edgar and Emmeline, in one volume; Julius Cæsar, the Toy Shop, All for Love, and a Pamphlet upon the Quack Doctors of George II.'s days, in another; the Vestal Virgins, the Duke of Lerma, and the Indian Queen, in a third. To these my mother had added the Guardian, and the happy copy of Mrs. Rowe's Letters which introduced me to Torquato Tasso.

The holidays made amends for this penury, and Bull's Circulating Library was then to me what the Bodleian would be now. Hoole, in his notes, frequently referred to the Orlando Furioso. I saw some volumes thus lettered on Bull's counter, and my heart leaped for joy. They proved to be the original; but the shopman, Mr. Cruett (a most obliging man he was), immediately put the translation into my hand, and I do not think any accession of fortune could now give me so much delight as I then derived from that vile version of Hoole's. There, in the notes, I first saw the name of Spenser, and some stanzas of the Faery Queen. Accordingly, when I returned the last volume I asked if that work was in the library. My friend Cruett replied that they had it, but it was written in old English, and I should not be able to understand it. This did not appear to me so much a necessary consequence as he supposed, and I therefore requested he would let me look at it. It was the quarto edition of '17, in three volumes, with large prints folded in the middle, equally worthless (like all the prints of that age) in design and execution. There was nothing in the

language to impede, for the ear set me right where the uncouth spelling (orthography it cannot be called) might have puzzled the eye; and the few words which are really obsolete, were sufficiently explained by the context. No young lady of the present generation falls to a new novel of Sir Walter Scott's with keener relish than I did that morning to the Faery Queen. If I had then been asked wherefore it gave me so much more pleasure than ever Ariosto had done, I could not have answered the question. I now know that it was very much owing to the magic of its verse; the contrast between the flat couplets of a rhymester like Hoole, and the fullest and finest of all stanzas written by one who was perfect master of his art. But this was not all. Ariosto too often plays with his subject; Spenser is always in earnest. The delicious landscapes which he luxuriates in describing, brought everything before my eyes. I could fancy such scenes as his lakes and forests, gardens and fountains presented; and I felt, though I did not understand, the truth and purity of his feelings, and that love of the beautiful and the good which pervades his poetry.

When Miss Tyler had lived about among her friends as long as it was convenient for them to entertain her, and longer in lodgings than was convenient for herself, she began to think of looking out for a house at Bristol; and, owing to some odd circumstances, I was the means of finding one which precisely suited her. Mrs. Wraxall, the widow of a lawyer, had heard, I know not how, that I was a promising boy, very much addicted to books, and

she sent to my mother requesting that I might drink tea with her one evening. The old lady was mad as a March hare after a religious fashion. Her behaviour to me was very kind; but as soon as tea was over, she bade me kneel down, and down she knelt herself, and prayed for me by the hour to my awful astonishment. When this was done she gave me a little book called Early Piety, and a coarse edition of the Paradise Lost, and said she was going to leave Bristol. It struck me immediately that the house which she was about to quit was such a one as my aunt wanted. I said so; and Mrs. Wraxall immediately answered, "Tell her that if she likes it, she shall have the remainder of my lease." The matter was settled in a few days, for this was an advantageous offer. The house at that time would have been cheap at 20*l.* a year, and there was an unexpired term of five years upon it at only 11*l.* This old lady was mother to Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, who had been bred up, and perhaps born, in that habitation. The owner was poor John Morgan's father. Mr. Wraxall, many years before, had taken it at a low rent upon a repairing lease, and had expended a great deal of money upon it at a time when it was rather a rural than a suburban residence. The situation had been greatly worsened, but it was still in the skirts of the city, and out of reach of its noise.

It stood in the avenue leading from Maudlin Lane to Horfield Lane or Road. When the plan of Bristol for Barrett's wretched history of that city was engraved, the buildings ended with Maudlin Lane, and all above was fields and gardens. That plan is

dated 1780, but must have been drawn at least ten years earlier, for it marks St. Leonard's Church, which was pulled down in the beginning of 1771. The avenue is marked there by the name of Red Coat Lane; a mere lane it appears, running up between fields, and with a hedge on each side. It was now, however, known by the name of Terril Street. There were at the bottom four or five houses on the left hand, built like the commencement of a street, and these were there when the plan was taken. Where they ended the steeper ascent began; and some houses followed which, though contiguous, stood each in its little garden some thirty yards back from the street. There were five of these, and the situation was such that they must have been in good estimation before some speculator, instead of building a sixth, erected at right angles with them a row of five or six inferior dwellings. Above these was only a steep paved avenue between high walls, inaccessible for horses because of some flights of steps. The view was to a very large garden opposite, one of those which supplied the market with fruit and culinary vegetables.

The house upon which Miss Tyler now entered was small but cheerful; Sir Nathaniel would perhaps be ashamed to remember it, but to his father it had evidently been an object of pride and pleasure. As is usual in suburban gardens, he had made the most of the ground. Though no wider than the front of the house, there was a walk paved with lozenge-shaped stones from the gate, and two gravel walks. The side beds were allotted to currant and gooseberry

bushes; the others were flower beds, and there were two large apple trees and two smaller ones. In front of the house the pavement extended, under which was an immense cistern for rain-water, so large as to be absurd; it actually seemed fitter for a fort than for a small private family. The kitchen was underground. On one side the gate was a summer-house with a sort of cellar, and another cistern below it.

As soon as my aunt was settled here, she sent for her brother William, who, since his mother's death, had been boarded at a substantial shopkeeper's, in the little village of Worle, on the Channel, about twenty miles from Bristol. I look back upon his inoffensive and monotonous course of life with a compassion which I was then not capable of feeling. For one or two years he walked into the heart of the city every Wednesday and Saturday to be shaved, and to purchase his tobacco; he went, also, sometimes to the theatre, which he enjoyed highly. On no other occasion did he ever leave the house; and, as inaction, aided, no doubt, by the inordinate use of tobacco, and the quantity of small beer with which he swilled his inside, brought on a premature old age, even this exercise was left off. As soon as he rose, and had taken his first pint of beer, which was his only breakfast, to the summer-house he went, and took his station in the bow-window as regularly as a sentinel in a watch-box. Here it was his whole and sole employment to look at the few people who passed, and to watch the neighbours, with all whose concerns at last he became perfectly intimate, by what he could thus oversee and overhear. He had a nickname for

every one of them. In the evening, my aunt and I generally played at five-card loo with him, in which he took an intense interest; and if, in the middle of the day, when I came home to dinner, he could get me to play at marbles in the summer-house, he was delighted. The points to which he looked on in the week were the two mornings when Joseph came to shave him; this poor journeyman barber felt a sort of compassionate regard for him, and he had an insatiable appetite for such news as the barber could communicate. Thus his days past in wearisome uniformity. He had no other amusement, unless in listening to hear a comedy read: he had not, in himself, a single resource for whiling away the time, not even that which smoking might have afforded him; and being thus utterly without an object for the present or the future, his thoughts were perpetually recurring to the past. His affections were strong and lasting. Indeed, at his mother's funeral his emotions were such as to affect all who witnessed them. That grief he felt to the day of his death. I have also seen tears in his eyes when he spoke of my sisters, Eliza and Louisa, both having died just at that age when he had most delight in fondling them, and they were most willing to be fondled. Whether it might have been possible to have awakened him to any devotional feelings may be doubted; but he believed and trusted simply and implicitly, and more, assuredly, would not be required from one to whom so little had been given. He lived about four years after this removal. His brother Edward died a year before him, of pulmonary con-

sumption. This event affected him deeply. He attended the funeral, described the condition of the coffins in the family vault in a manner which I well remember, and said that his turn would be next. One day, on my return from school at the dinner-hour, going into the summer-house, I found him sitting in the middle of the room and looking wildly; he told me he had been very ill, that he had had a seizure in the head, such as he had never felt before, and that he was certain something very serious ailed him. I gave the alarm: but it passed over; neither he himself, nor any person in the house, knew what such a seizure indicated. The next morning he arose as usual, walked down stairs into the kitchen, and as he was buttoning the knees of his breeches, exclaimed, "Lord have mercy upon me!" and fell from the chair. His nose was bleeding when he was taken up. Immediate assistance was procured, but he was dead before it arrived. The stroke was mercifully sudden, but it had been preceded by a long and gradual diminution of vital strength; and I have never known any other case in which, when there were so few external appearances of disease or decay, the individual was so aware that his dissolution was approaching.

I often regret that my memory should have retained so few of the traditional tales and proverbial expressions which I heard from him, more certainly than from all other persons in the course of my life. Some of them have been lately recalled to my recollection by Grimm's Collection. What little his mind was capable of receiving it had retained tenaciously,

and of these things it had a rich store. Upon his death Miss Tyler became the sole survivor of her paternal race.

LETTER XII.

HIS RECOLLECTIONS OF SCHOOL AT BRISTOL.—HIS SCHOOLMASTER AND SCHOOLFELLOWS.

August 20th, 1823.

MY memory strengthens as I proceed in this task of retrospection; and yet while some circumstances,—a look, a sound, a gesture, though utterly unimportant, recur to me more vividly than the transactions of yesterday, others, which I would fain call to mind, are irrevocably gone. I have sometimes fancied, when dreaming upon what may be our future state, that in the next world we may recover a perfect recollection of all that has occurred to us in this, and in the prior stages of progressive existence, through which it is not improbable that our living principle has ascended. And yet the best and happiest of us must have something or other, *altâ mente repostum*, for which a draught of Lethe would be desired.

The pleasantest of my school years were those which I past at Williams's, especially after I took up my abode at Terrill Street, for I then went home to dinner, and found much more satisfaction there in my own pursuits from twelve o'clock till two, than in his contracted play-ground. What I learnt there,

indeed, was worth little; it was just such a knowledge of Latin as a boy of quick parts and not without diligence will acquire under bad teaching. When I had gone through the Metamorphoses, Williams declared his intention of taking me from the usher and instructing me in Virgil himself, no other of his pupils having proceeded so far. But the old man, I suppose, discovered that the little classical knowledge which he ever possessed had passed away as irrevocably as his youth, and I continued under the usher's care, who kept me in the Eclogues so long, that I was heartily sick of them, and I believe have never looked in them from that time. Over and over again did that fellow make me read them; probably because he thought the book was to be gone through in order, and was afraid to expose himself in the Georgics. No attempt was made to ground me in prosody; and as this defect in my education was never remedied (for when I went to Westminster I was too forward in other things to be placed low enough in the school for regular training in this), I am at this day as liable to make a false quantity as any Scotchman. I was fond of arithmetic, and have no doubt that, at that time, I should have proceeded with pleasure through its higher branches, and might have been led on to mathematics, of which my mind afterwards became impatient, if not actually incapable.

Sometimes, when Williams was in good humour, he suspended the usual business of the school and exercised the boys in some uncommon manner. For example, he would bid them all take their slates, and write as he should dictate. This was to try their

spelling, and I remember he once began with this sentence: "As I walked out to take the air, I met a man with red hair, who was heir to a good estate, and was carrying a hare in his hand." Another time he called upon all of a certain standing to write a letter, each upon any subject that he pleased. You will perhaps wonder to hear that no task ever perplexed me so woefully as this. I had never in my life written a letter, except a formal one at Corston before the holydays, every word of which was of the master's dictation, and which used to begin "Honoured Parents." Some of the boys produced compositions of this stamp; others, who were a little older and more ambitious, wrote in a tradesman-like style, soliciting orders, or acknowledging them, or sending in an account. For my part I actually cried for perplexity and vexation. Had I been a blockhead this would have provoked Williams; but he always looked upon me with a favourable eye, and, expressing surprise rather than anger, he endeavoured both to encourage and shame me to the attempt. To work I fell at last, and presently presented him with a description of Stonehenge, in the form of a letter, which completely filled the slate. I had laid hands not long before upon the Salisbury Guide, and Stonehenge had appeared to me one of the greatest wonders in the world. The old man was exceedingly surprised, and not less delighted, and I well remember how much his astonishment surprised me, and how much I was gratified by his praise. I was not conscious of having done anything odd or extraordinary, but the boys made me so; and to the sort of envy which it excited

among them, I was indebted for a wholesome mortification. One morning, upon entering the school a few minutes before the master made his appearance, some half-dozen of them beset me, and demanded whether I, with all my learning, could tell what the letters *i. e.* stood for. The question was proposed in the taunting tone of expected triumph, which I should well have liked to disappoint. But when I answered that I supposed it was for John the Evangelist, the unlucky guess taught me never again to be ashamed of acknowledging myself ignorant of what I really did not know. It was an useful lesson, especially as I was fortunate enough to perceive, early in life, that there were very many subjects of which I must of necessity be so.

Of all my schoolmasters Williams is the one whom I remember with the kindliest feelings. His Welsh blood was too easily roused; and his spirit was soured by the great decline of his school. His numbers in its best days had been from seventy to an hundred; now they did not reach forty, when the times were dearer by all the difference which the American War had occasioned, and his terms could not be raised in proportion to the increased price of everything, because schools had multiplied. When his ill circumstances pressed upon him, he gave way, perhaps more readily, to impulses of anger; because anger, like drunkenness, suspends the sense of care, and an irascible emotion is felt as a relief from painful thoughts. His old wig, like a bank of morning clouds in the east, used to indicate a stormy day. At better times both the wig and the countenance would have beseemed a higher

station; and his anger was the more frightful, because at those better times there was an expression of good humour and animation in his features which was singularly pleasing, and I believe denoted his genuine character. He would strike with a ruler sometimes when his patience was greatly provoked by that incorrigible stupidity, which of all things perhaps puts patience to the severest trial. There was a hulking fellow (a Creole with Negro features and a shade of African colour in him), who possessed this stupidity in the highest degree; and Williams, after flogging him one day, made him pay a halfpenny for the use of the rod, because he required it so much oftener than any other boy in the school. Whether G—— was most sensible of the mulct or the mockery, I know not, but he felt it as the severest part of the punishment. This was certainly a tyrannical act; but it was the only one of which I ever saw Williams guilty.

There were a good many Creoles at this school, as indeed at all the Bristol schools. Cassava bread was among the things which were frequently sent over to them by their parents, so that I well knew the taste of Mandioc long before I heard its name. These Creoles were neither better nor worse than so many other boys in any respect. Indeed, though they had a stronger national cast of countenance, they were, I think, less marked by any national features of mind or disposition than the Welsh, certainly much less than the Irish. One of them (evidently by his name of French extraction) was however the most thoroughly fiendish human being that I have ever known. There

is an image in Kehama drawn from my recollection of the devilish malignity which used sometimes to glow in his dark eyes; though I could not there give the likeness in its whole force, for his countenance used to darken with the blackness of his passion. Happily for the slaves on the family estate, he, though a second brother, was wealthy enough to settle in England; and an anecdote which I heard of him when he was about thirty years of age, will show that I have not spoken of his character too strongly. When he was shooting one day, his dog committed some fault. He would have shot him for this upon the spot, if his companion had not turned the gun aside, and, as he supposed, succeeded in appeasing him: but when the sport was over, to the horror of that companion (who related the story to me), he took up a large stone and knocked out the dog's brains. I have mentioned this wretch, who might otherwise have better been forgotten, for a charitable reason; because I verily believe that his wickedness was truly an original, innate, constitutional sin, and just as much a family disease as gout or scrofula. I think so, because he had a nephew who was placed as a pupil with King, the surgeon at Clifton, and in whom at first sight I recognised a physiognomy which I hope can belong to no other breed. His nephew answered in all respects to the relationship, and to the character which nature had written in every lineament of his face. He ran a short career of knavery, profligacy, and crimes, which led him into a prison, and there he died by his own hand.

Another of my then schoolfellows, who was also

a Creole, came to a like fate, but from very different circumstances. He was the natural son of a wealthy planter by a woman of colour; and went through the school with the character of an inoffensive, gentlemanly, quiet boy, who never quarrelled with anybody, nor ever did an ill-natured thing. When he became a young man, he was liberally supplied with money, and launched into expenses which such means tended to create and seemed to justify. The supplies suddenly ceased, I am not certain whether by an experiment of rigour, or owing to his father's dying without providing for him in his will; the latter I think was the case. Poor H——, however, was arrested for debt, and put an end to his hopeless prospects in prison, by suicide.

Colonel Hugh Baillie, who made himself conspicuous some few months ago, by very properly resenting the unjust expulsion of his son from Christ Church (an act of the late dean's miserable misgovernment), was one of my contemporaries at this school. My old Latin master, Duplanier, kept a French academy next door; and by an arrangement between the two masters, his boys came three mornings in the week to write and cypher with us. Among these intermitting schoolfellows was poor John Morgan, with whom Coleridge lived for several years; Gee, whom I have already mentioned; and a certain H—— O——, with whom I had an adventure in after-life, well worthy of preservation.

This youth was about three years older than I: of course, I had no acquaintance with him; nor did I ever exchange a word with him, unless it were when

the whole school were engaged in playing prison-base, in which he took the lead as the *πόδας ὠκὺς* of his side. His father was a merchant, concerned among other things in the Irish linen trade: my father had some dealings with him; and in his misfortunes found him, what I believe is *not* a common character, an unfeeling creditor. They were a proud family; and a few years after my father's failure, failed themselves, and, as the phrase is, went to the dogs. This H—— O—— was bred to be an attorney, but wanted either brains or business to succeed in his calling—I dare say both. I had forgotten his person: and should never have thought of him again (except when the game of prison-base was brought to my mind), if, in the year 1798, I had not been surprised by hearing one day at Cottle's shop, that he had been there twice or thrice to inquire for me, and had left a message requesting that, if I came into Bristol that day (it was during the year of my abode at Westbury), I would call on him at an attorney's office, at a certain hour. Accordingly, thither I went, rung at the bell, inquired for Mr. O——, gave my name, and was ushered into a private room. Nothing could be more gracious than his recognition of a person, whom he must have past twenty times in the street during the last three months: "we had been schoolfellows at such a place, at such a time," &c. &c., all which I knew very well, but how we came to be acquaintances now was what I had to learn; and to explain this cost him a good deal of humming and hawing, plentifully intermixed with that figure of speech which the Irish call *blarney*, and which is a

much more usual as well as useful figure than any of those, with the hard names of which poor boys used to be tormented in the Latin grammar. From the use which he made of this figure he appeared to know that I was an author of some notoriety, and that one of my books was called Joan of Arc. The compliments which he laid on, were intermingled with expressions of great regret for the deficiencies of his own education: he learnt a little Latin, a little French, but there it had stopt; in short, I knew what must be the extent of his acquirements — "for you and I, Mr. Southey, you know, were schoolfellows." At last it came out that, from a consciousness of these deficiencies, he had been led to think that a glossary of the English language was a work very much wanted, and that no one could be more competent to supply such a *desideratum*, than the gentleman whom he had the honour of addressing. I was as little able to guess what his deficiencies had to do with a glossary as you can be; and not feeling any curiosity to get at a blockhead's meaning, endeavoured to put an end to the interview, by declaring at once my utter inability to execute such a work, for the very sufficient reason that I was wholly ignorant of several languages, the thorough knowledge of which was indispensable in such researches. This produced more *blarney*, and an explanation that my answer did not exactly apply to what his proposal intended. What he meant was this, — there were a great many elegant words, which persons like himself, whose education had been neglected, would often like to use in conversation (he said this

feelingly, it had often been his own case, he felt it, indeed, every day of his life); they would be glad to use these words if they only knew their meaning; and what he wanted was a glossary or dictionary of such words, a little book which might be carried in the pocket. It would certainly command an extensive sale: I could make the book; he had a large acquaintance, and could procure subscribers for it; and we might make a thriving partnership concern in this literary undertaking. Before he arrived at this point, the scene had become far too comical to leave any room in my feelings for anger. I kept my countenance (which has often been put to much harder trials than my temper, and is moreover a much more difficult thing to keep), declined his proposal decidedly but civilly, took my leave in perfect good humour, and hastened back to Cottle's, to relieve myself by telling him the adventure.

LETTER XIII.

VISITORS TO HIS SCHOOLMASTER.

May 27th, 1824.

NEARLY four years have elapsed since I began this series of reminiscences, and I have only written twelve letters, which bring me only into the twelfth year of my age. Alas! this is not the only case in which I feel that the remaining portion of my life,

were it even to be protracted longer than there is reason to expect upon the most favourable calculation of chances, must be too short for the undertakings which I have sometimes dreamt of completing. It is, however, the case in which I can with least inconvenience quicken my speed; and frail as by humiliating experience I know my own resolutions to be, I will nevertheless endeavour to send off a letter from this time forth, at the end of every month. Matter for one more will be afforded before I take leave of poor old William Williams; and that part of it which has no connection with myself, will not be the least worth relation.

It was a good feature in his character that he had a number of poor retainers, who used to drop in at school hours, and seldom went away empty handed. There was one poor fellow, familiarly called Dr. Jones, who always set the school in a roar of laughter. What his real history was I know not; the story was, that some mischievous boys had practised upon him the dreadfully dangerous prank of giving him a dose of cantharides, and that he had lost his wits in consequence. I am not aware that it could have produced this effect, though it might very probably have cost him his life. Crazy, however, he was, or rather half-crazed, and it was such a merry craziness that it would have been wishing him ill to have wished him otherwise. The bliss of ignorance is merely negative; there was a positive happiness in his insanity; it was like a perpetual drunkenness, sustained just at that degree of pleasurable excitement, which, in the sense of present enjoyment, is equally re-

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gardless of the future and of the past! He fancied himself a poet, because he could produce, upon demand, a rhyme in the sorryest doggrel; and the most celebrated *improvisatore* was never half so vain of his talent as this queer creature, whose little figure of some five feet two I can perfectly call to mind, with his suit of rusty black, his more rusty wig, and his old cocked hat. Whenever he entered the schoolroom, he was greeted with a shout of welcome; all business was suspended; he was called upon from all sides to give us a rhyme; and when the master's countenance offered any encouragement, he was entreated also to ask for half a holyday, which, at the price of some doggrel, was sometimes obtained. You will readily believe he was a popular poet.

The talent of composing imitative verses has become so common in our days, that it will require some evidence to make the next generation believe what sort of verses were received as poetry fifty years ago, when any thing in rhyme passed current. The magazines, however, contain proof of this; the very best of them abounding in such trash as would be rejected now by the provincial newspapers. Whether the progress of society, which so greatly favours the growth and development of imitative talent, is equally favourable to the true poetical spirit, is a question which I may be led to consider hereafter. But as I had the good fortune to grow up in an age when poets, according to the old opinion, were born and not made, and as at the time to which this part of my reminiscences relates, the bent of my nature had decidedly shown itself, I may here make some

observations upon the grounds and consequences of that opinion.

In the earliest ages certain it is, that they who possessed that gift of speech which enabled them to clothe ready thoughts in measured or elevated diction, were held to be inspired. False oracles were uttered in verse, and true prophecies delivered in poetry. There was, therefore, some reason for the opinion. A belief akin to it, and not improbably derived from it, prevails, even now, among the ignorant; and was much more prevalent in my childhood, when very few of the lower classes could write or read, and when in the classes above them, those who really were ignorant, knew that they were so. Slight of hand passed for magic in the dark ages, slight of tongue for inspiration; and the ignorant, when they were no longer thus to be deluded, still looked upon both as something extraordinary and wonderful. Especially the power of arranging words in a manner altogether different from the common manner of speech, and of disposing syllables so as to produce a harmony which is felt by the dullest ear (a power which has now become an easy, and therefore is every day becoming more and more a common acquirement), appeared to them what it originally was in all poets, and always will be in those who are truly such; and even now, though there are none who regard its possessor with superstitious reverence, there are many who look upon him as one who, in the constitution of his mind, is different from themselves. As no madman ever pretended to a religious call, without finding some open-eared listeners ready to

believe in him and become his disciples; so, perhaps, no one ever composed verses with facility, who had not some to admire and applaud him in his own little circle. This was the case even with so poor a creature as Dr. Jones. And to the intoxication of conceit, which the honest admiration of the ignorant has produced in half-crazed rhymers like him, it is owing that some marvellous productions have found their way to the press. Dr. Jones, by whom I have been led into this digression, was a doggrelist of the very lowest kind. One other such I once met with, when I was young enough to be heartily amused at an exhibition which, farcical as it was, would now make me mournful. He was a poor engraver, by name Coyte; very simple, very industrious, very poor, and completely crazed with vanity, because he could compose off-hand, upon any subject, such rhymes as the bellman's used to be. Bedford's father used occasionally to relieve him, for he was married and could earn but a miserable livelihood for his family. I saw him on one of his visits to Brixton, in the year 1793, when he was between forty and fifty years of age. His countenance and manner might have supplied Wilkie with a worthy subject. Mr. Bedford (there never lived a kinder-hearted man) loved merriment, and played him off, in which Grosvenor and Horace joined, and I was not backward. We gave him subjects upon which he presently wrote three or four sorry couplets. No creature was ever more elated with triumph than he was at the hyperbolical commendations which he received; and this, mingled with the genuine humility which the sense of his

condition occasioned, produced a truly comic mixture in his feelings and gesticulations. What with pleasure, inspiration, exertion, and warm weather (for it was in the dog-days), he perspired as profusely, though I dare say not as fragrantly, as an elephant in love; and literally overflowed at eyes and mouth, frothing and weeping in a salivation of happiness. I think this poor creature published "A Cockney's Rambles in the Country," some twelve or fourteen years ago, for such a pamphlet I saw advertised, by Joseph William Coyte; and I sent for it at the time, but it was too obscure to be found.

These are examples of the very humblest and meanest rhymesters, who nevertheless felt themselves raised above their companions, because they could rhyme. I have been acquainted with poets in every intermediate degree between Jones and Wordsworth; and their conceit has almost uniformly been precisely in an inverse proportion to their capacity. When this conceit acts upon low and vulgar ignorance, it produces direct craziness, as in the instances of which I have been speaking. In the lower ranks of middle life I have seen it, without amounting to insanity, assume a form of such extravagant vanity that the examples which have occurred within my own observation, would be deemed incredible if brought forward in a farce.—Of these in due time. There is another more curious manifestation of the same folly, which I do not remember ever to have seen noticed; but which is well worthy of critical observation, because it shows in its full extent, and therefore *in puris naturalibus*, a fault which is found

in by much the greater part of modern poetry — the use of words which have no signification, where they are used, or which, if they mean any thing, mean nonsense — the substitution of sound for sense. I could show you passage after passage in contemporary writers — the most popular writers, and some of them the most popular passages in their works, which when critically, that is to say, strictly but justly, examined, are as absolutely nonsensical as the description of a moonlight night in Pope's Homer. Pope himself intended that for a fine description, and did not perceive that it was as absurd as his own "Song by a Person of Quality." Now, there have been writers who have possessed the talent of stringing together couplet after couplet in sonorous verse, without any connection, and without any meaning, or any thing like a meaning; and yet they have had all the enjoyment of writing poetry, have supposed that this actually was poetry, and published it as such. I know a man who has done this, who made me a present of his poem; yet he is very far from being a fool; on the contrary, he is a lively pleasant companion, and his talents in conversation are considerably above par. The most perfect specimen I ever saw of such verses was a poem called "The Shepherd's Farewell," printed in quarto, some five-and-thirty years ago. Coleridge once had an imperfect copy of it. I forget the author's name; but when I was first at Lisbon, I found out that he was a schoolmaster, and that poor Paul Berthon had been one of his pupils. Men of very inferior power may imitate the manner of good

writers with great success; as, for example, the two Smiths have done; but I do not believe that any imitative talent could produce genuine nonsense verses, like those of "The Shepherd's Farewell." The intention of writing nonsensically would appear, and betray the purport of the writer. Pure, involuntary, unconscious nonsense is inimitable by any effort of sense.

Such writers as these, if they were cross-examined, would be found to imagine that they composed under the real influence of poetical inspiration; and were Taylor the pagan to set about *heathenizing* one of them, I am persuaded that he would not find it difficult to make him believe in the Muses. In fact, when this soul of conceit is in action, the man is fairly beside himself. An innate self-produced inebriety possesses him; he abandons himself to it, and while the fit lasts is as mad as a March hare. The madness is not permanent; because such inspiration, according to received opinion, only comes on when the rhymester is engaged in his vocation. And well it is when it shows itself in rhyme; for the case is very different with him who has the gift of uttering prose with the same fluency, and the same contempt of reason. He in good earnest sets up for an inspired messenger; he has received *a call;* and there are not only sects, but societies, in this country ready to accredit him, and take him into employ, and send him forth with a roving commission, through towns and villages, to infect others with the most infectious of all forms of madness, disturb the peace of families, and prepare the way for another attempt to over-

throw the Established Church—another struggle, which will shake these kingdoms to their centre.

Dr. Jones has led me into a long digression, upon which I should not have entered if I had foreseen that it would have extended so far. Another of Williams's visitors, and an equally popular one, was a glorious fellow, Pullen by name, who during the age of buckskin made a fortune as a breeches-maker, in Thomas Street. If I could paint a portrait from memory, you should have his likeness. Alas, that I can only give it in words! and that that perfect figure should at this hour be preserved only in my recollections! *Sic transit gloria mundi!* His countenance expressed all that could be expressed by human features, of thorough-bred vulgarity, prosperity, pride of purse, good living, coarse humour, and boisterous good nature. He wore a white tie-wig. His eyes were of the hue and lustre of scalded gooseberries, or oysters in sauce. His complexion was the deepest extract of the grape; he owed it to the Methuen treaty; my uncle, no doubt, had seen it growing in his rides from Porto; and Heaven knows how many pipes must have been filtered through the Pullenian system, before that fine permanent purple could have been fixed in his cheeks. He appeared always in buckskins of his own making, and in boots. He would laugh at his own jests with a voice like Stentor, supposing Stentor to have been hoarse; and then he would clap old Williams on the back with a hand like a shoulder of mutton for breadth and weight. You may imagine how great a man we thought him. They had probably been boon com-

panions in their youth, and his visits seldom failed to make the old man lay aside the schoolmaster. He was an excellent hand at demanding half a holyday; and when he succeeded, always demanded three cheers for his success, in which he joined with all his might and main. If I were a believer in the Romish purgatory, I should make no doubt that every visit that he made to that schoolroom, was carried to the account of his good works. Some such set off he needed; for he behaved with brutal want of feeling to a son who had offended him, and who, I believe, would have perished for want, if it had not been for the charity of John Morgan's mother; an eccentric but thoroughly good woman, and one of those people whom I shall rejoice to meet in the next world. This I learnt from her several years afterwards. At this time Pullen was a widower between fifty and sixty; a hale strong-bodied man, upon whom his wine-merchant might reckon for a considerable annuity, during many years to come. He had purchased some lands adjacent to the Leppincott property near Bristol, in the pleasantest part of that fine neighbourhood. Sir Henry Leppincott was elected member for the city, at that election in which Burke was turned out. He died soon afterwards; his son was a mere child; and Pullen, the glorious Pullen, in the plenitude of his pride, and no doubt in a new pair of buckskins, called on the widow; introduced himself as the owner of the adjacent estate; and upon that score, without farther ceremony, proposed marriage as an arrangement of mutual fitness. Lady Leppincott, of course, rang the bell,

and ordered the servants to turn him out of the house. This is a story which would be deemed too extravagant in a novel; and yet you would believe it without the slightest hesitation, if you had ever seen the incomparable breeches-maker.

Mrs. Estan the actress, whom you must remember, was at that time preparing to make her first appearance on the stage, at the Bristol Theatre. The part she had chosen was Letitia Hardy in "The Belle's Stratagem," and in that part she had to dance a *minuet de le cour*, to perfect herself in which, and perhaps for the sake of accustoming herself to figure away before an audience, she came to our school on two or three dancing-days, and took lessons there,—a circumstance too remarkable to be forgotten in a schoolboy's life. Walters, the dancing-master, was not a little proud of his pupil. That poor man was for three years the plague of my life, and I was the plague of his. In some unhappy mood he prevailed on my mother to let me learn to dance, persuading himself as well as her, that I should do credit to his teaching. It must have been for my sins that he formed this opinon: in an evil hour for himself and for me was it formed; he would have had much less trouble in teaching a bear, and far better success. I do not remember that I set out with any dislike or contempt of dancing; but the unconquerable incapacity which it was soon evident that I possessed, produced both, and the more he laboured to correct an incorrigible awkwardness, the more awkwardly of course I performed. I verily believe the fiddlestick was applied as much to my head as to the fiddle-

strings, when I was called out. But the rascal had a worse way than that of punishing me. He would take my hands in his, and lead me down a dance; and then the villain would apply his thumb-nail against the flat-surface of mine, in the middle, and and press it till he left the mark there; this species of torture I suppose to have been his own invention, and so intolerable it was that at last, whenever he had recourse to it, I kicked his shins. Luckily for me he got into a scrape by beating a boy unmercifully at another school, so that he was afraid to carry on this sort of contest; and giving up at last all hope of ever making me a votary of the graces or of the dancing Muse, he contented himself with shaking his head and turning up his eyes in hopelessness, whenever he noticed my performance. I had always Tom Madge for my partner; a poor fellow long since dead, whom I remember with much kindness. He was as active as a squirrel, but every limb seemed to be out of joint when he began to dance. We were always placed as the last couple, and went through the work with the dogged determination of never dancing more when we should once be delivered from the dancing-master — a resolution which I have piously kept, even unto this day.

Williams, who read well himself and prided himself upon it, was one day very much offended with my reading, and asked me scornfully who taught me to read. I answered my aunt. "Then," said he "give my compliments to your aunt; and tell her that my old horse, that has been dead these twenty years, could have taught you as well." I delivered the

message faithfully, to her great indignation. It was never forgotten or forgiven, and perhaps it accelerated the very proper resolution of removing me. My uncle made known his intention of placing me at Westminster. His connection with Christ Church naturally led him to prefer that to any other school, in the hope that I should get into college, and so be elected off to a studentship. But as I was in feeble health, and, moreover, had been hitherto very ill taught, it was deemed advisable that I should be placed for twelve months under a clergyman competent to prepare me for a public school.

Before I take leave of Williams, two or three memoranda upon the slip of paper before me, must be scored off. There was a washing-tub in the play-ground, with a long towel on a reel beside it; this tub was filled every morning for the boarders to perform their ablutions, all in the same water, and whoever wished to wash hands or face in the course of the day, had no other. I was the only boy who had any repugnance to dip his hands in this pig-trough. There was a large cask near, which received the rain-water; but there was no getting at the water, for the top was covered, and to have taken out the spiggot would have been a punishable offence. I, however, made a little hollow under the spiggot, to receive the drippings, just deep enough to wet the hands, and there I used to wash my hands with clean water when they required it. But I do not remember that any one ever followed my example. I had acquired the sense of cleanliness and the love of it, and they had not.

A time was remembered when there were wars of school against school, and a great battle which had taken place in the adjoining park between Williams's boys and Foot's, my first master. At both schools I heard of this, and the victory was claimed by both; for it was an old affair, a matter of tradition, (not having been noticed in history,) long before my generation, or any who were in the then school, but remembered as an event second only in importance, if second, to the war of Troy.

It was fully believed in both these schools, and at Corston, that no bastard could span his own wrist. And I have no doubt this superstition prevailed throughout that part of England.

LETTER XIV.

HE IS SENT AS A DAY-SCHOLAR TO A CLERGYMAN IN BRISTOL.—EARLY POETICAL EFFORTS.

June 29th, 1824.

IN a former letter I have mentioned Mrs. S——, who had been Miss Tyler's school-mistress. My aunt kept up an acquaintance with her as long as she lived, and after her death with her two daughters, who lived together in a house on Redcliff Parade, the pleasantest situation in Bristol if there had been even a tolerable approach to it. One of these sisters was unmarried; the other a widow with one son, who was just of my age: Jem Thomas was his name. Mr. Lewis, the clergyman under whom I was placed

at the end of 1786 or the beginning of 1787, lodged and boarded with these sisters. He had been usher at the grammar school; and, having engaged to educate this boy, was willing to take a few more pupils, from the hours of ten till two. When I went to him, he had two others, C—— and R——, both my seniors by three or four years. The former I used to call Caliban: he might have played that character without a mask, that is, supposing he could have learnt the part; for the resemblance held good in mind as well as in appearance, his disposition being somewhat between pig and baboon. The latter was a favourite with Lewis; his father had formerly practised in Bristol as a surgeon, but had now succeeded to an estate of some value. He was little and mannish, somewhat vain of superficial talents, and with a spice of conceit both in his manners and in his dress; but there was no harm in him. He took an honorary Master's degree at the Duke of Portland's installation in 1793, which was the only time I ever saw him after we ceased to be fellow-pupils. He married about that time, and died young.

Caliban had a sister whom I shall not libel when I call her Sycorax. A Bristol tradesman, a great friend of S. T. C.'s, married her for her money; and the only thing I ever heard of Caliban in after-life was a story which reached me of her everywhere proclaiming that her brother was a very superior man to Mr. Coleridge, and had confuted him one evening seven-and-twenty times in one argument. The word which Coleridge uses as a listener when he is expected to throw in something,

with or without meaning, to show that he is listening, is, or used to be, as I well remember—*undoubtedly*. The foolish woman had understood this expletive in its literal meaning, and kept account with her fingers that he pronounced it seven-and-twenty times, while enduring the utterance of an animal in comparison with whom a centaur would deserve to be called human, and a satyr rational.

Jem Thomas was a common-place lad, with a fine handsome person, but by no means a good physiognomy, and I cannot remember the time when I was not a physiognomist. He was educated for a surgeon, and ruined by having at his disposal, as soon as he came of age, something between two and three thousand pounds, which his grandmother unwisely left to him at once, instead of leaving it to his mother for her life. This he presently squandered; went out professionally to the East Indies, and died there. So much for my three companions, among whom it was not possible that I could find a friend. There came a fourth, a few weeks only before I withdrew: he was a well-minded boy, and has made a very respectable man. Harris was his name: he married Betsy Petrie, who was one of my fellow-travellers in Portugal.

I profited by this year's tuition less than I should have done at a good school. It is not easy to remedy the ill effects of bad teaching; and the farther the pupil has advanced in it, the greater must be the difficulty of bringing him into a better way. Lewis, too, had been accustomed to the mechanical movements of a large school, and was at a loss how to

proceed with a boy who stood alone. I began Greek under him, made nonsense-verses, read the *Electa ex Ovidio et Tibullo* and Horace's Odes, advanced a little in writing Latin, and composed English themes.

C'est le premier pas qui coute. I was in as great tribulation when I had the first theme to write, as when Williams required me to produce a letter. The text of course had been given me; but how to begin, what to say, or how to say it, I knew not. No one who had witnessed my perplexity upon this occasion would have supposed how much was afterwards to be spun from these poor brains. My aunt, at last in compassion, wrote the theme for me. Lewis questioned me if it was my own, and I told him the truth. He then encouraged me sensibly enough; put me in the way of composing the common-places of which themes are manufactured (indeed he caused me to transcribe some rules for themes, making a regular receipt as for a pudding); and he had no reason afterwards to complain of any want of aptitude in his scholar, for when I had learnt that it was not more difficult to write in prose than in verse, the ink dribbled as daintily from my pen as ever it did from John Bunyan's. One of these exercises I still remember sufficiently well to know that it was too much like poetry, and that the fault was of a hopeful kind, consisting less in inflated language than in poetical imagery and sentiment. But this was not pointed out as a fault, and luckily I was left to myself; otherwise, like a good horse, I might have been spoilt by being broken in too soon.

It was still more fortunate that there was none to direct me in my favourite pursuit, certain as it is that any instructor would have interfered with the natural and healthy growth of that poetical spirit which was taking its own course. That spirit was like a plant which required no forcing, nor artificial culture; only air and sunshine, and the rains and the dews of heaven. I do not remember in any part of my life to have been so conscious of intellectual improvement as I was during the year and half before I was placed at Westminster: an improvement derived, not from books or instruction, but from constantly exercising myself in English verse: and from the developement of mind which that exercise produced, I can distinctly trace my progress by help of a list, made thirty years ago, of all my compositions in verse, which were then in existence, or which I had at that time destroyed.

Early as my hopes had been directed toward the drama, they received a more decided and more fortunate direction from the frequent perusal of Tasso, Ariosto, and Spenser. I had read also Mickle's Lusiad and Pope's Homer. If you add to these an extensive acquaintance with the novels of the day, and with the Arabian and mock-Arabian tales, the whole works of Josephus (taken in by me with my pocket-money in three-score sixpenny numbers, which I now possess), such acquaintance with Greek and Roman history as a schoolboy picks up from his lessons and from Goldsmith's abridged histories, and such acquaintance with their fables as may be learnt from Ovid, from the old Pantheon, and above all from

the end of Littleton's Dictionary, you will have a fair account of the stock upon which I began. But Shakespeare, and Beaumont and Fletcher, must not be forgotten; nor Sidney's Arcadia; nor Rowley's Poems, for Chatterton's history was fresh in remembrance, and that story, which would have affected one of my disposition anywhere, acted upon me with all the force of local associations.

The first of my Epic Dreams was created by Ariosto. I meant to graft a story upon the Orlando Furioso, not knowing how often this had been done by Italian and Spanish imitators. Arcadia was to have been the title and the scene; thither I meant to carry the Moors under Marsilius after their overthrow in France, and there to have overthrown them again by a hero of my own, named Alphonso, who had caught the Hippogriff. This must have been when I was between nine and ten, for some verses of it were written on the covers of my Phædrus. They were in the heroic couplet. Among my aunt's books was the first volume of Bysshe's Art of Poetry, which, worthless as it is, taught me at that age the principle upon which blank verse is constructed, and thereby did me good service at a good time. I soon learnt to prefer that metre, not because it was easier than rhyme (which was easy enough), but because I felt in it a greater freedom and range of language, because I was sensible that in rhyming I sometimes used expressions, for the sake of the rhyme, which were far-fetched, and certainly would not have occurred without that cause. My second subject was the Trojan Brutus: the defeat and death of King Richard and the Union

of the two Roses was my third. In neither of these did I make much progress; but with the story of Egbert I was more persevering, and partly transcribed several folio sheets. The sight of these was an encouragement to proceed, and I often looked at them with delight in the anticipation of future fame. This was a solitary feeling, for my ambition or vanity (whichever it may deserve to be called) was not greater than the shyness which accompanied it. My portfolio was of course held sacred. One day, however, it was profaned by an acquaintance of my aunt's who called to pay a morning visit. She was shown into the parlour, and I, who was sent to say my aunt would presently wait upon her, found her with my precious Egbert in her hand. Her compliments had no effect in abating my deep resentment at this unpardonable curiosity; and, though she was a good-natured woman, I am afraid I never quite forgave her. Determining, however, never to incur the risk of a second exposure, I immediately composed a set of characters for my own use.

In my twelfth and thirteenth year, besides these loftier attempts, I wrote three heroic epistles in rhyme: the one was from Diomede to Egiale; the second from Octavia to Mark Anthony; the third from Alexander to his father Herod, a subject with which Josephus supplied me. I made also some translations from Ovid, Virgil, and Horace; and composed a satirical description of English manners, as delivered by Omai, the Taheitean, to his countrymen on his return. On the thirteenth anniversary of my birth, supposing (by an error which appeared to be common enough at the

end of the century) that I was then entering the first year of my teens instead of completing it, and looking upon that as an aweful sort of step in life, I wrote some verses in a strain of reflection upon mortality grave enough to provoke a smile when I recollect them. Among my attempts at this time were two descriptive pieces entitled Morning in the Country, and Morning in Town, in eight-syllable rhymes, and in imitation of Cunningham. There was also a satirical peep into Pluto's dominions, in rhyme. I remember the conclusion only, and that because it exhibits a singular indication how strongly and how early my heart was set upon that peculiar line of poetry which I have pursued with most ardour. It described the Elysium of the Poets, and that more sacred part of it in which Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Spenser, Camoens, and Milton were assembled. While I was regarding them, Fame came hurrying by with her arm full of laurels and asking in an indignant voice if there was no poet who would deserve them? Upon which I reached out my hand, snatched at them, and awoke.

One of these juvenile efforts was wholly original in its design. It was an attempt to exhibit the story of the Trojan War in a dramatic form, laying the scene in Elysium, where the events which had happened on earth were related by the souls of the respective heroes as they successively descended. The opening was a dialogue between Laodamia and Protesilaus, in couplets: the best rhymes which I had yet written. But I did not proceed far, probably because the design was too difficult, and this would

have been reason enough for abandoning it even if I had not entered with more than usual ardour upon a new heroic subject, of which Cassibelan was the hero. I finished three books of this poem, and had advanced far in the fourth before I went to Westminster. All this was written fairly out in my own private characters, and in my best writing, if one may talk of calligraphy in an unknown hand which looked something like Greek, but more like conjuration, from the number of trines and squares which it contained. These characters, however, proved fatal to the poem, for it was not possible for me to continue it at school, for want of privacy; disuse made the cypher so difficult that I could not read it without almost spelling as I went on; and at last, in very vexation, I burnt the manuscript.

I wonder whether Spurzheim could, at that time, have discovered an organ of constructiveness in my pericranium. The Elysian drama might seem to indicate that the faculty was there, but not a trace of it was to be found in any of the heroic poems which I attempted. They were all begun upon a mere general notion of the subject, without any prearrangement, and very little preconception of the incidents by which the catastrophe was to be brought about. When I sat down to write, I had to look as much for the incidents, as for the thoughts and words in which they were to be clothed. I expected them to occur just as readily; and so indeed, such as they were, they did. My reading in the old chivalrous romances has been sufficiently extensive to justify me in asserting that the greater number of

those romances were written just in the same way, without the slightest plan or forethought; and I am much mistaken if many of the Italian romantic poems were not composed in the same inartificial manner. This I am sure,—that it is more difficult to plan than to execute well; and that abundance of true poetical power has been squandered for want of a constructive talent in the poet. I have felt this want in some of the Spanish and Portuguese writers, even more than their want of taste. The progress of my own mind towards attaining it (so far as I may be thought to have attained it) I am able to trace distinctly; not merely by the works themselves, and by my own recollections of the views with which they were undertaken and composed, but by the various sketches and memoranda for four long narrative poems, made during their progress from the first conception of each till its completion. At present, the facility and pleasure with which I can plan an heroic poem, a drama, and a biographical or historical work, however comprehensive, is even a temptation to me. It seems as if I caught the bearings of a subject at first sight; just as Telford sees from an eminence, with a glance, in what direction his road must be carried. But it was long before I acquired this power, — not fairly, indeed, till I was about five or six and thirty; and it was gained by practice, in the course of which I learnt to perceive wherein I was deficient.

There was one point in which these premature attempts afforded a hopeful omen, and that was in the diligence and industry with which I endeavoured to acquire all the historical information within my

reach, relating to the subject in hand. Forty years ago, I could have given a better account of the birth and parentage of Egbert, and the state of the Heptarchy during his youth, than I could do now without referring to books; and when Cassibelan was my hero, I was as well acquainted with the division of the island among the ancient tribes, as I am now with the relative situation of its counties. It was, perhaps, fortunate that these pursuits were unassisted and solitary. By thus working a way for myself, I acquired a habit and a love for investigation, and nothing appeared uninteresting which gave me any of the information I wanted. The pleasure which I took in such researches, and in composition, rendered me in a great degree independent of other amusements; and no systematic education could have fitted me for my present course of life, so well as the circumstances which allowed me thus to feel and follow my own impulses.

LETTER XV.

CHARACTER OF MISS TYLER. — HIS MOTHER. — SHADRACH WEEKS. — HIS BROTHER HENRY PLACED WITH MISS TYLER. — HIS SISTER'S DEATH.

July 17th, 1824.

FEW boys were ever less qualified for the discipline of a public school than I was, when it was determined to place me at Westminster; for if my school education had been ill-conducted, the life which I led with Miss Tyler tended in every respect still more to un-

fit me for the new scenes, the new world almost it might be called, on which I was about to enter.

When my aunt settled at Bristol, she brought with her a proud contempt for Bristol society. In fact, she had scarcely any acquaintance there, and seldom saw any company, except when some of her Bath friends came to Clifton for the summer; or when the players took up their abode in the city, for then Mr. Dimond used to visit her. He was a most gentlemanly and respectable man, as well as a good actor. Great is the delight which I have had in seeing him perform, and hardly less was that which I have felt in listening to his conversation. The days when he dined with us were almost our only gala days. At such times, and when she went out, Miss Tyler's appearance and manners were those of a woman who had been bred in the best society and was equal to it; but if any stranger or visitor had caught her in her ordinary apparel, she would have been as much confused as Diana when Actæon came upon her bathing-place, and almost with as much reason, for she was always in a bed-gown and in rags. Most people, I suspect, have a weakness for old shoes; ease and comfort and one's own fireside are connected with them; in fact, we never feel any regard for shoes till they attain to the privileges of age, and then they become almost as much a part of the wearer as his corns. This sort of feeling my aunt extended to old clothes of every kind; the older and the raggeder they grew, the more unwilling she was to cast them off. But she was scrupulously clean in them; indeed, the principle upon which her whole household econ>my

was directed was that of keeping the house clean, and taking more precautions against dust than would have been needful against the plague in an infected city. She laboured under a perpetual *dusto-phobia*, and a comical disease it was; but whether I have been most amused or annoyed by it, it would be difficult to say. I had, however, in its consequences an early lesson how fearfully the mind may be enslaved by indulging its own peculiarities and whimsies, innocent as they may appear at first.

The discomfort which Miss Tyler's passion for cleanliness produced to herself, as well as to her little household, was truly curious: to herself, indeed, it was a perpetual torment; to the two servants a perpetual vexation, and so it would have been to me if nature had not blest me with an innate hilarity of spirit which nothing but real affliction can overcome. That the better rooms might be kept clean, she took possession of the kitchen, sending the servants to one which was underground; and in this little, dark, confined place, with a rough stone floor, and a sky-light (for it must not be supposed that it was a best kitchen, which was always, as it was intended to be, a comfortable sitting-room; this was more like a scullery), we always took our meals, and generally lived. The best room was never opened but for company; except now and then on a fine day to be aired and dusted, if dust could be detected there. In the other parlour, I was allowed sometimes to read, and she wrote her letters, for she had many correspondents; and we sat there sometimes in summer, when a fire was not needed, for fire produced

ashes, and ashes occasioned dust, and dust, visible or invisible, was the plague of her life. I have seen her order the teakettle to be emptied and refilled, because some one had passed across the hearth while it was on the fire preparing for her breakfast. She had indulged these humours till she had formed for herself notions of uncleanness almost as irrational and inconvenient as those of the Hindoos. She had a cup once buried for six weeks, to purify it from the lips of one whom she accounted unclean; all who were not her favourites were included in that class. A chair in which an unclean person had sat was put out in the garden to be aired; and I never saw her more annoyed than on one occasion when a man, who called upon business, seated himself in her own chair: how the cushion was ever again to be rendered fit for her use, she knew not! On such occasions, her fine features assumed a character either fierce or tragic; her expressions were vehement even to irreverence; and her gesticulations those of the deepest and wildest distress,—hands and eyes uplifted, as if she was in hopeless misery, or in a paroxysm of mental anguish.

As there are none who like to be upon ill terms with themselves, most people find out some device whereby they may be reconciled to their own faults; and in this propensity it is that much of the irreligion in the world, and much of its false philosophy, have originated. My aunt used frequently to say that all good-natured people were fools. Hers was a violent temper, rather than an ill one; there was a great deal of kindness in it, though it was under no

restraint. She was at once tyrannical and indulgent to her servants, and they usually remained a long while in her service, partly I believe from fear, and partly from liking: from liking, because she sent them often to the play (which is probably to persons in that condition, as it is to children, the most delightful of all amusements), and because she conversed with them much more than is usual for any one in her rank of life. Her habits were so peculiar, that the servants became in a certain degree her confidants; she therefore was afraid to change them and they even, when they wished to leave her, were afraid to express the wish, knowing that she would regard it as a grievous offence, and dreading the storm of anger which it would bring down. Two servants in my remembrance left her for the sake of marrying; and, although they had both lived with her many years, she never forgave either, nor ever spoke of them without some expression of bitterness. I believe no daughter was ever more afraid of disclosing a clandestine marriage to a severe parent, than both these women were of making their intention known to their mistress, such was the ascendancy that she possessed over them. She had reconciled herself to the indulgence of her ungoverned anger, by supposing that a bad temper was naturally connected with a good understanding and a commanding mind.

Besides her servants, there were two persons over whom she had acquired the most absolute control. Miss Palmer was the one: a more complete example cannot be imagined of that magic which a strong

mind exercises over a weak one. The influence which she possessed over my mother was equally unbounded and more continual, but otherwise to be explained: it was the ascendancy of a determined and violent spirit over a gentle and yielding one. There was a difference of twelve years between their ages, and the authority which Miss Tyler had first exerted as an elder sister she never relaxed. My mother was one of those few persons (for a few such there are) who think too humbly of themselves. Her only fault (I verily believe she had no other), was that of yielding submissively to this imperious sister, to the sacrifice of her own inclination and judgment and sense of what was right. She had grown up in awe and admiration of her, as one who moved in a superior rank, and who, with the advantage of a fine form and beautiful person, possessed that also of a superior and cultivated understanding: withal, she loved her with a true sisterly affection which nothing could diminish, clearly as she saw her faults, and severely as at last she suffered by them. But never did I know one person so entirely subjected by another, and never have I regretted anything more deeply than that subjection, which most certainly in its consequences shortened her life.

If my mother had not been disfigured by the small-pox, the two sisters would have strikingly resembled each other, except in complexion, my mother being remarkably fair. The expression, however, of the two countenances, was as opposite as the features were alike, and the difference in disposition was not less marked. Take her for all in all, I do not

believe that any human being ever brought into the world, and carried through it, a larger portion of original goodness than my dear mother. Every one who knew her loved her, for she seemed made to be happy herself, and to make every one happy within her little sphere. Her understanding was as good as her heart: it is from her I have inherited that alertness of mind, and quickness of apprehension, without which it would have been impossible for me to have undertaken half of what I have performed. God never blessed a human creature with a more cheerful disposition, a more generous spirit, a sweeter temper, or a tenderer heart. I remember that when first I understood what death was, and began to think of it, the most fearful thought it induced was that of losing my mother; it seemed to me more than I could bear, and I used to hope that I might die before her. Nature is merciful to us. We learn gradually that we are to die,—a knowledge which, if it came suddenly upon us in riper age, would be more than the mind could endure. We are gradually prepared for our departure by seeing the objects of our earliest and deepest affections go before us; and even if no keener afflictions are dispensed to wean us from this world, and remove our tenderest thoughts and dearest hopes to another, mere age brings with it a weariness of life, and death becomes to the old as natural and desirable as sleep to a tired child.

My father's house being within ten minutes' walk of Terril Street (or rather run, for I usually galloped along the bye-ways), few days passed on which I did not look in there. Miss Tyler never entered the

door, because there was an enmity between her and Thomas Southey. She had given just occasion to it. They hated each other cordially now, and took no pains to conceal it. My visits at home, therefore, were short, and I was seldom allowed to dine or pass the evening there. My brother Tom was at school; the difference of age between us made us at that time not very suitable companions when we were together. There was not a single boy of my own age, or near it, in any of the few families with whom either my mother or aunt were acquainted; and my only friend and companion was my aunt's servant boy, Shadrach Weeks, her maid's brother. Shad, as we called him, was just my own age, and had been taken into her service soon after she settled in Bristol. He was a good-natured, active, handy lad, and became very much attached to me, and I to him. At this hour, if he be living, and were to meet me, I am sure he would greet me with a hearty shake by the hand; and, be it where it might, I should return the salutation. We used to work together in the garden, play trap in the fields, make kites and fly them, try our hands at carpentry, and, which was the greatest of all indulgences, go into the country to bring home primrose, violet, and cowslip roots; and sometimes to St. Vincent's Rocks, or rather the heights about a mile and a half farther down the river, to search for the bee and fly orchis. Some book had taught me that these rare flowers were to be found there; and I sought for them year after year with such persevering industry, for the unworthy purpose of keeping them in pots at home,

(where they uniformly pined and died,) that I am afraid botanists who came after me may have looked for them there in vain. Perhaps I have never had a keener enjoyment of natural scenery than when roaming about the rocks and woods on the side of the Avon with Shad and our poor spaniel Phillis. Indeed, there are few scenes in the island finer of their kind; and no other where merchant vessels of the largest size may be seen sailing between such rocks and woods—the shores being upon a scale of sufficient magnitude to supply all that the picturesque requires, and not upon so large a one as to make the ships appear comparatively insignificant.

Had it not been for this companion, there would have been nothing to counteract the effeminating and debilitating tendency of the habits to which my aunt's peculiarities subjected me. Pricking play-bills had been the pastime which she encouraged as long as I could be prevailed on to pursue it; and afterwards she encouraged me to cut paper into fantastic patterns. But I learnt a better use of my hands in Shad's company; and we became such proficients in carpentry, that, before I went to Westminster, we set about the enterprise of making and fitting up a theatre for puppets. This was an arduous and elaborate work, of which I shall have more to say hereafter, as our design extended with our progress. At this time, little more had been done than to finish the body of the theatre, where there were pit, boxes, and gallery, and an ornamented ceiling, which, when it was put on, made the whole look on the outside like a box of unaccountable form. The spec-

tator was to look through a glass behind the gallery, which was intended to have been a magnifier, till, to our great disappointment, we were assured at the optician's that no single magnifier could produce any effect at the distance which this was required to act. The scenery and stage contrivances I shall speak of in due time; for this was an undertaking which called forth all our ingenuity, and continued for several years to occupy me during the holydays.

Before I went to Westminster, my brother Henry had been taken into Miss Tyler's household, when he was about five years old. In 1787 a daughter was born, and christened Margaretta. I remember her as well as it is possible to remember an infant; that is, without any fixed and discriminating remembrance. She was a beautiful creature, and I was old enough to feel the greatest solicitude for her recovery, when I set off for London early in the spring of 1788. A thoughtless nursemaid had taken her out one day to the most exposed situation within reach, what is called the Sea Banks, and kept her there unusually long while a severe east wind was blowing. From that hour she drooped; cough and consumption came on. I left her miserably and hopelessly ill, and never saw her more. This was the first death that I had ever apprehended and dreaded, and it affected me deeply.

LETTER XVI.

IS PLACED AT WESTMINSTER.—SCHOOL-FELLOWS.—FIRST HOLY-DAYS.—ANECDOTE OF GEORGE THE THIRD.—LATIN VERSES.

August 29th, 1824.

THE business of placing me at Westminster afforded my aunt an excuse for going to London; Miss Palmer was easily persuaded to accompany her and to hire a carriage for the season, and we set off in February 1788. I had never before been a mile from Bath in that direction, and when my childish thoughts ever wandered into the *terra incognita* which I was one day to explore, this had been the road to it, simply because all the other outlets from that city were familiar to me. We slept at Marlborough the first night; at Reading the second, and on the third day we reached Salt Hill. Tom and Charles Palmer were summoned from Eton to meet their aunt there, and we remained a day for the purpose of seeing Windsor, which I have never seen since. Lodgings had been engaged in a small house in Pall Mall, for no situation that was less fashionable would content Miss Tyler, and she had a reckless prodigality at fits and starts, the effects of which could not be counteracted by the parsimony and even penuriousness of her usual habits. Mr. Palmer was at that time comptroller of the Post Office, holding the situation which he had so well

deserved, and from which he was not long afterwards most injuriously displaced. We visited him, and the Newberrys, and Mrs. Dolignon, and went often to the theatres; and my aunt appeared to be as happy as if she were not incurring expenses which she had no means of discharging. My father had given her thirty pounds for the journey, a sum amply sufficient for taking me to school and leaving me there, and moreover as much as he could afford; but she had resolved upon passing the season in town, as careless of all consequences as if she had been blind to them.

About six weeks elapsed before I was deposited at my place of destination. In the interval I had passed a few days with the Newberrys at Addiscombe, and with the Miss Delamares at Cheshunt; at the latter place I was happy, for they were excellent women, to whom my heart opened, and I had the full enjoyment of the country there, without any drawback. London I very much disliked: I was too young to take any pleasure in the companies to which I was introduced as an inconvenient appendage of my aunt's; nor did I feel half the interest at the theatres, splendid as they were, which I had been wont to take at Bath and Bristol, where every actor's face was familiar to me, and every movement of the countenance could be perceived. I wished for Shad, and the carpentry, and poor Phillis, and our rambles among the woods and rocks. At length, upon the first of April (of all ominous days that could be chosen), Mr. Palmer took me in his carriage to Dean's Yard, introduced me to Dr. Smith, entered my name with him, and, upon his recommendation, placed me

at the boarding-house, then called Otly's, from its late mistress, but kept by Mrs. Farren; and left me there, with Samuel Hayes, the usher of the house, and of the fifth form, for my tutor.

Botch Hayes, as he was denominated, for the manner in which he mended his pupil's verses, kept a smaller boarding-house next door; but at this time a treaty of union between the two houses was going on, which, like the union of Castille and Aragon, was to be brought about by a marriage between the respective heads of the several states. This marriage took place during the ensuing Whitsun-holydays; and the smaller flock was removed in consequence to our boarding-house, which then took the name of Hayes's, but retained it only a few months, for Hayes, in disgust at not being appointed under-master, withdrew from the school: his wife of course followed his fortunes, and was succeeded by Mrs. Clough, who migrated thither with a few boarders from Abingdon Street. But as Botch Hayes is a person who must make his appearance in the Athenæ Cantabrigienses (if my lively, happy, good-natured friend Mr. Hughes carries into effect his intention of compiling such a work), I will say something of him here.

He was a man who, having some skill and much facility in versifying, walked for many years over the Seatonian race-ground at Cambridge, and enjoyed the produce of Mr. Seaton's Kislingbury estate without a competitor. He was, moreover, what Oldys describes Nahum Tate to have been,— "a free, good-natured fuddling companion;" to all which qualities his countenance bore witness. With better conduct and

better fortune, Hayes would have had learning and talents enough to have deserved and obtained promotion. His failings were so notorious, and the boys took such liberties with him (sticking his wig full of paper darts in school, and, indeed, doing or leaving undone whatever they pleased, in full reliance upon his easy and indolent good-nature), that it would have been a most unfit thing to have appointed him under-master, in course of seniority, when Vincent succeeded Dr. Smith. Perhaps he would not have taken offence at being passed by, if a person thoroughly qualified had been chosen in his stead; but he could not bear to have an inferior usher, who was a man of no talents whatever, promoted over him, and therefore, to the great injury of his worldly affairs, which could ill bear such a sacrifice, he left the school altogether. Hayes it was who edited those sermons which Dr. Johnson is supposed to have written for his friend Dr. Taylor.

I was placed in the under fourth, a year lower than I might have been if I could have made Latin verses, and yet more than a year too high for being properly trained to make them. The manner of introducing a boy into the ways of the school was by placing him for a week or ten days under the direction of one in the same remove, who is called his substance, the new comer being the shadow; and, during this sort of noviciate, the shadow neither takes nor loses place by his own deserts, but follows the substance. A diligent and capable boy is, of course, selected for this service; and Smedley, the usher of the fourth, to my great joy, picked out George Strachey,

the very individual on whom my physiognomical eyes would have rested if I might have made a choice throughout the whole school. Strachey and I were friends at first sight. But he boarded at home; and it is in the boarding-house, more than in the school, that a friend is wanted: and there, God knows, I had for some time a solitary heart.

The present Lord Amherst was head of the house; a mild, inoffensive boy, who interfered with no one, and, having a room to himself (which no other boy had), lived very much to himself in it, liked and respected by every body. I was quartered in the room with ———, who afterwards married that sweet creature, Lady ———, and never was woman of a dove-like nature more unsuitably mated, for ———, when in anger, was perfectly frantic. His face was as fine as a countenance could be which expressed so ungovernable and dangerous a temper; the finest red and white, dark eyes and brows, and black curling hair; but the expression was rather that of a savage than of a civilized being, and no savage could be more violent. He had seasons of good-nature, and at the worst was rather to be dreaded than disliked; for he was plainly not master of himself. But I had cause to dread him; for he once attempted to hold me by the leg out of the window; it was the first floor, and over a stone area: had I not struggled in time, and clung to the frame with both hands, my life would probably have been sacrificed to this freak of temporary madness. He used to pour water into my ear when I was a-bed and asleep, fling the porter-pot or the poker

at me, and in many ways exercised such a capricious and dangerous tyranny, merely by right of the strongest (for he was not high enough in the school to fag me), that at last I requested Mr. Hayes to remove me into another chamber. Thither he followed me; and, at a very late hour one night, came in wrapt in a sheet, and thinking to frighten me by personating a ghost, in which character he threw himself upon the bed, and rolled upon me. Not knowing who it was, but certain that it was flesh and blood, I seized him by the throat, and we made noise enough to bring up the usher of the house, and occasion an inquiry, which ended in requiring ——'s word that he never would again molest me.

He kept his word faithfully, and left school a few months afterwards, when he was about seventeen or eighteen, and apparently full grown,—a singularly fine and striking youth; indeed, one of those figures which you always remember vividly. I heard nothing of him till the Irish rebellion: he served in the army there; and there was a story, which got into the newspapers, of his meeting a man upon the road, and putting him to death without judge or jury, upon suspicion of his being a rebel. It was, no doubt, an act of madness. I know not whether any proceedings took place (indeed, in those dreadful times, anything was passed over); but he died soon afterwards, happily for himself, and all who were connected with him.

Miss Tyler returned to Bristol before the Whitsun-holydays, having embarrassed herself, and had recourse to shifts of which I knew too much. To

spare the expense of a journey so soon after my entrance at school, I was invited for the holydays by the good Miss Delamares to Cheshunt. I passed three weeks there very happily, having the use of an excellent microscope, and frequently taking my book into the greenhouse, and reading there for the sake of the temperature and the odour of the flowers. During part of the time there were two other guests in the house. The one was a nice good-humoured warm-hearted girl, in the very flower of youth and feeling, who was engaged to a French or Swiss clergyman, Mercier by name. Her own was La Chaumette. She was of Swiss extraction, and, having passed the preceding year among her relations in the Pays de Vaud, had brought home something like a *maladie du pays*, if that phrase may be applied to a longing after any country which is not our own: it was, however, a very natural affection for one who was compelled to exchange Lausanne for Spitalfields. I used to abuse Switzerland as a land of bears and wolves, and ice and snow, for the sake of seeing the animation with which she defended and praised it. Not long afterwards she married to her heart's content—and, to the very great regret of all who knew her, died in her first child-bed. Poor Betsey La Chaumette! after a lapse of nine and-twenty years, I thought of her in Switzerland, and, when I was at Echichens with the Awdrys, met with a Swiss clergyman who knew her and remembered her visit to that country.

I have heard her mother relate an anecdote of herself which is well worthy of preservation, because of another personage to whom it relates also. She was

a most lively, good-humoured, entertaining woman; and her conversation was the more amusing because it was in broken English, intermingled plentifully with French interjections. In person she was strong-featured, large, and plain even to ugliness, if a countenance can be called ugly which was always brightened with cheerfulness and good-nature. There was a Mr. Giffardiere, who held some appointment in the Queen's household (I think he used to read French to her), and was one of those persons with whom the royal family were familiar. Mrs. La Chaumette was on a visit to him at Windsor; and it was insisted upon by the Giffardieres that she must have one of the Lunardi bonnets (immortalized by Burns) which were then in fashion, it being the first age of balloons. This she resisted most *womanfully*, pleading her time of life and ugliness with characteristic volubility and liveliness, but to no purpose. Her eloquence was overruled; and as nobody could appear without such a bonnet, such a bonnet she had. All this went to the palace; for kings and queens are sometimes as much pleased at being acquainted with small private affairs as their subjects are in conversing upon great public ones. Mrs. La Chaumette's conversation was worth repeating, even to a king; and she was so original a person, that the King knew her very well by character, and was determined to see her. Accordingly he stopped his horse one day before Giffardiere's apartments, and, after talking a while with him, asked if Mrs. La Chaumette was within, and desired she might be called to the window. She came in all the agitation or *fluster* that such a

summons was likely to excite. The King spoke to her with his wonted good-nature, asked her a few questions, hoped she liked Windsor, and concluded by saying he was glad to hear she had consented at last to have a Lunardi bonnet. Trifling as this is, it is a sort of trifling in which none but a kind-hearted king would have indulged; and I believe no one ever heard the story without liking George III. the better for it: I am sure this was the effect it produced in the circle of her acquaintance. How well do I remember the looks, and tones, and gestures, and *mon Dieus!* with which she accompanied the relation.

James Beresford was the other visitor at Cheshunt, an unsuccessful translator of the Æneid into blank verse, but the very successful author of the Miseries of Human Life. He was then a young man, either just in orders, or on the point of being ordained. This story was then remembered of him at the Charter House: that he had been equally remarkable when a boy for his noisiness and his love of music; and having one day skipped school to attend a concert, there was such an unusual quietness in consequence of his absence, that the master looked round, and said "Where's Beresford? I am sure he cannot be in school!" and the detection thus brought about cost poor Beresford a flogging. Him also, like Betsey La Chaumette, I never saw after that visit; and, with all his pleasantness and good-nature, he left upon me an unpleasant impression, from a trifling circumstance which I remember as indicative of my own moral temper at that time. Our holydays' exercise was to compose a certain number of Latin verses from any part

of Thomson's Spring. I did my task doggedly, in such a manner that it was impossible any exercise could have been more unlike a good one, and yet the very best could not more effectually have proved the diligence with which it had been made. There was neither a false quantity, nor a grammatical fault, nor a decent line in the whole. The ladies made me show it to Beresford; and he, instead of saying, in good-natured sincerity, "You have never been taught to make verses, but it is plain that you have taken great pains in making these, and therefore I am sure the usher will give you credit for what you have done," returned them to me, saying, "Sir, I see you will be another Virgil one of these days." I knew that this was neither deserved as praise nor as mockery; and I felt then, as I have continued through life to do, that unmerited censure brings with it its own antidote in the sense of injustice which it provokes, but that nothing is so mortifying as praise to which you are conscious that you have no claim.

Smedley spoke to me sensibly and kindly about this exercise, and put me in training as far as could then be done. He had no reason to complain of my want of good-will, for before the next holydays I wrote about fifty long and short verses upon the death of Fair Rosamund, which I put into his hands. The composition was bad enough, I dare say, in many respects; but it gave proofs of good progress. They were verses to the ear as well as to the fingers; and I remember them sufficiently to know that the attempt was that of a poet. It is worth remembering as being the only Latin poem that I ever composed voluntarily.

For there my ambition ended. When I was so far upon a footing with the rest of the remove, that I could make verses decent enough to pass muster, I was satisfied. It was in English, and not in heathen Latin, that

"The sacred Sisters for their own
Baptized me in the springs of Helicon;"

and I also knew, though I did not know Lope de Vega had said it, that

"Todo paxaro en su nido
Natural canto mantiene,
En que ser perfeto viene:
Porque en el canto aprendido
Mil imperfeciones tiene."

LETTER XVII.

RECOLLECTIONS OF WESTMINSTER CONTINUED.

March 16th, 1825.

THE Christmas before my entrance at Westminster, I remember seeing in the newspapers the names of those boys who acted in the Westminster Play that year (1787). For one who knew nothing of the school, nor of any person in it, it was something to be acquainted with three or four boys, even by name; and I pleased myself with thinking that they were soon to be my friends. This was a *vain* fancy in both senses of the word: by their being selected to perform in the Play, I supposed they were studious and clever boys, with whom I should of course become familiar; and I had no notion of the inequality

which station produces at a public school. It is such that, when I came to Westminster, I never exchanged a word with any of these persons. Oliphant, Twistleton, and Carey, were three of them. Carey was a marked favourite with Vincent, and afterwards with Cyril Jackson at Christ Church; he is now Bishop of Exeter, having been head master of the school where, at the time of which I am now writing, he was one of the monitors. It is said that he is indebted to Cyril Jackson for his promotion to the bench, the dean requesting a bishopric for him, or rather earnestly recommending him for one, when he refused it for himself. Twistleton was remarkable for a handsome person, on which he prided himself, and for wearing his long hair loose and powdered in school, but tied and crest when he went out; for in those days hobble-de-hoys used to let their hair grow, cultivating it for a tail, which was then the costume of manhood. The Westminster Play gave him a taste for private theatricals: immediately after leaving school he married a girl with whom he had figured away in such scenes; she became an actress afterwards in public of some pretensions, and much notoriety, as being the wife of an honourable and a clergyman. For a while Twistleton figured in London as a popular preacher, which too frequently is but another kind of acting; he then went out to India, and died there lately as archdeacon in Ceylon, where he had latterly taken a very useful and becoming part in promoting the efforts which are made in that island for educating and converting the natives. Oliphant was the more remarkable person

of the three, and would probably have risen to celebrity, had he lived. He was from Liverpool, the son, I believe, of a tradesman, one of the queerest fellows in appearance that I ever remember to have seen; and so short-sighted, that we had stories of his walking into a grave in the cloisters, and running his head through a lamp-lighter's ladder in the street. The boys in the sixth form speak in public, once a week in rotation, three king's scholars and three town boys: generally this is got through as a disagreeable task; but now and then an ambitious fellow mouths instead of mumbling it; and I remember Twistleton and Oliphant reciting the scene between Brutus and Cassius with good effect, and with voices that filled the school. After leaving Cambridge Oliphant tried his fortune as an author, and published a novel which I never saw; but it had some such title as "Memoirs of a Wild Goose Philosopher." He died soon afterwards.

His first efforts in authorship were, however, made as a periodical essayist, before he left school. The Microcosm, which the Etonians had recently published, excited a spirit of emulation at Westminster; and soon after I went there, some of the senior king's scholars, of whom Oliphant was at the head, commenced a weekly paper called the Trifler. As the master's authority in our age of lax discipline could not prevent this, Smith contented himself, in his good-natured easy way, with signifying his disapprobation, by giving as a text for a theme, on the Monday after the first number appeared, these words *scribimus indocti doctique*. There were two or three

felicitous papers in the Microcosm which made a reputation for the book; indeed Eton has never produced men of more genius than those who contributed to it. The Trifler may in general have been upon a par with it, that is to say, neither of them could contain anything better in serious composition than good school boy's exercises: but it had no lucky hits of a lighter kind, and when forty numbers had been published, more to the contentment of the writers than of any body else, the volume was closed and was forgotten. The only disgraceful circumstance attending it, was that a caricature was put forth representing Justice as weighing the Microcosm against the Trifler, and the former with its authors, and the king as a make-weight on their side, was made to kick the beam. This was designed and etched by James Hook, then a junior king's scholar, and now the very Reverend Dean of Worcester. I do not suppose it was sold in the print-shops, but the boys were expected to subscribe for it at a shilling each.

My first attempt to appear in print was in the aforesaid Trifler. I composed an elegy upon my poor little sister's death, which took place just at that time. The verses were written with all sincerity of feeling, for I was very deeply affected: but that they were very bad I have no doubt; indeed I recollect enough of them to know it. However, I sent them by the penny post, signing them with the letter B; and in the next number this notice was taken of the communication: "B's Elegy must undergo some alterations, a liberty all our correspondents must

allow us to take." After this I looked for its appearance anxiously, but in vain; for no farther mention was made of it, because no alteration could have rendered it fit for appearance, even among the compositions of elder schoolboys. Oliphant and his colleagues never knew from whence it came; I was far too much below them to be suspected, and indeed, at that time, I was known out of my remove for nothing but my curly head.

Curly heads are not common, I doubt whether they can be reckoned at three per cent. upon the population of this country; but luckily for me, the present Sir Charles Burrell (old Burrell as we then called him, a very good-natured man) had one as well as myself. The space between Palace Yard and St. Margaret's Churchyard was at that time covered with houses. You must remember them, but I knew all the lanes and passages there; intricate enough they were, and afforded excellent cover, just in the most dangerous part, on the border, when we were going out of bounds, or returning home from such an expedition. The improvements which have laid all open there, have done no service to the Westminster boys, and have deprived me of some of the pleasantest jogging-places for memory that London used to contain. In one of these passages was the door of a little school-master, whose academy was announced by a board upon the front of a house, close to St. Margaret's Churchyard. Some of the day boys in my remove took it into their heads, in the pride of Westminster, to annoy this academician, by beating up his quarters, and one day I joined in the party.

The sport was to see him sally with a cane in his hand, and to witness the admiration of his own subjects at our audacity. He complained at last, as he had good cause, to Vincent; but no suspicion fell or could fall upon the real parties; for so it was, that the three or four ring-leaders in these regular rows were in every respect some of the best boys in the school, and the very last to whom any such pranks would have been imputed. The only indication he could give, was that one of the culprits was a curly-headed fellow. One evening, a little to my amusement, and not a little to my consternation, I heard old Burrell say that Vincent had just sent for him, and taxed him with making a row at a school-master's in St. Margaret's Churchyard; and would hardly believe the protestations of innocence, which he reiterated with an oath when he told the story, and which I very well knew to be sincere. It was his curly head, he said, that brought him into suspicion. I kept my own counsel, and did not go near the academy again.

At a public school you know something of every boy in your own boarding-house, and in your own form; you are better acquainted with those in your own remove (which at Westminster, means half a form); and your intimacies are such as choice may make from these chances of juxta-position. All who are above you you know by sight and by character, if they have any: to have none indicates an easy temper, inclined rather to good than evil. Of those who are below you, unless they are in the same house, you are acquainted with very few, even by name. The

number, however, of those with whom you are more or less brought in contact, is such, that after-life seldom or never affords another opportunity of knowing so many persons so well, and forming so fair an estimate of human nature. Is that estimate a favourable one? and what says my own experience? Of the three hundred boys who were my contemporaries during four years (about fifty, perhaps, being changed annually) there were very few upon whose countenance Nature had set her best testimonials. I can call to mind only one wherein the moral and intellectual expression were in perfect accord of excellence, and had full effect given them by the features which they illuminated. Those who bore the stamp of reprobation, if I may venture to use a term which is to be abhorred, were certainly more in number, but not numerous. The great majority were of a kind to be whatever circumstances might make them; clay in the potter's hand, more or less fine; and as it is fitting that such subjects should be conformed to the world's fashion and the world's uses, a public school was best for them. But where there is a tendency to low pursuits and low vices, such schools are fatal. They are nurseries also for tyranny and brutality. Yet, on the other hand, good is to be acquired there, which can be attained in no other course of education.

Of my own contemporaries there, a fair proportion have filled that place and maintained that character in the world, which might have been expected from the indications of their boyhood. Some have manifested talents which were completely latent at that time;

and others who put forth a fair blossom have produced no fruit. But generally speaking, in most instances where I have had opportunity of observing, the man has been what the boy promised, or, as we should say in Cumberland, offered to be.

Our boarding house was under the tyranny of W. F——. He was, in Westminster language, a great beast; that is, in plain truth, a great brute; as great a one as ever went upon two legs. But there are two sorts of human brutes—those who partake of wolf-nature or of pig-nature, and F—— was of the better breed, if it be better to be wolfish than swinish. He would have made a good prize-fighter, a good buccaneer, or, in the days of Cœur de Lion or of my Cid, a good knight, to have cut down the misbelievers with a strong arm and a hearty good will. Every body feared and hated him; and yet it was universally felt that he saved the house from the tyranny of a greater beast than himself. This was a fellow by name B——, who was mean and malicious, which F—— was not: I do not know what became of him, his name has not appeared in the Tyburn Calendar, which was the only place to look for it, and if he has been hanged, it must have been under an *alias*, an observation which is frequently made when he is spoken of by his schoolfellows. He and F—— were of an age and standing, the giants of the house, but F—— was the braver, and did us the good office of keeping him in order. They hated each other cordially, and the evening before we were rid of "Butcher B——", F—— gave the whole house the great satisfaction of giving him a good thrashing.

It was so obviously impossible to put Latin and Greek into E——, at either end, even if there had been any use in so doing, that no attempt was made at it. The Greek alphabet he must have known, but he could have known nothing more of Greek, nor indeed of any thing else, than just to qualify him for being crammed to pass muster, at passing from one form to another; and so he was floated up to the Shell, beyond which the tide carried no one. He never did an exercise for himself of any kind; they were done by deputy, whom the fist appointed; and after awhile it was my ill fortune to be promoted to that office. My orders were that the exercises must always be bad enough; and bad enough they were: I believe, indeed, that the habit of writing bad Latin for him spoilt me for writing it well, when, in process of time, I had exercises of the same kind to compose in my own person. It was a great deliverance when he left school. I saw him once afterwards, in the High Street at Oxford. He recognised me instantly, stopped me, shook me heartily by the hand, as if we had been old friends, and said, "I hear you became a devilish fine fellow after I left, and used to *row* Dodd (the usher of the house) famously!" The look and the manner with which these words were spoken I remember perfectly; the more so, perhaps, because he died soon afterwards, and little as it was to have been expected, there was something in his death which excited a certain degree of respect, as well as pity. He went into the army, and perished in our miserable expedition to St. Domingo, where, by putting himself forward on all

occasions of service, and especially by exerting himself in dragging cannon when the soldiers were unequal to the fatigue, he brought on the yellow fever, and literally fell a victim to a generosity and good-nature which he had never been supposed to possess.

That fever proved fatal to a good many of my Westminster school-fellows, who, some of them because they were fit for the army, and others because they were fit for nothing else, took to that profession at the commencement of the revolutionary war. Rather a large proportion of them perished in the West Indies. "Who the devil would have thought of my burying old Blair!" was the exclamation of one who returned; and who of the two might better have been buried there himself. Blair was a cousin of the present Countess of Lonsdale, and I was as intimate with him as it was possible to be with one who boarded in another house: though it would not have been easy to have found a boy in the whole school more thoroughly unlike myself in everything, except in temper. He was, as Lord Lonsdale told me, a spoilt-child — idle, careless, fond of dogs and horses, of hunting rats, baiting badgers, and above all of driving stage-coaches. But there was a jovial hilarity, a perpetual flow of easy good spirits, a sunshine of good humour upon his countenance, and a merriment in his eye, which bring him often to my mind, and always make me think of him with a great deal of kindness. He was remarkably fat, and might have sat for the picture of Bacchus, or of Bacchus's groom; but he was active withal.

Blair spent one summer holidays with his mother Lady Mary, at Spa, and used to amuse me greatly by his accounts of the place and the people, and the delight of travelling abroad, but above all by his description of the French postilions. He had brought back a postilion's whip, having learnt to crack it in perfection; and that French flogger, as he called it, did all his exercises for him: for if Marsden, whom he had nominated to the office of secretary for this department, ever demurred when his services were required, crack went the French flogger, and the sound of what he never felt produced prompt obedience. The said Marsden was a person who could have poured out Latin verses, such as they were, with as much facility as an Italian *improvisatore* performs his easier task. I heard enough about Spa, at that time, to make me very desirous of seeing the place; and when I went thither, after my first visit to the field of Waterloo, it was more for the sake of poor Blair than for any other reason. Poor fellow, the yellow fever made short work with his plethoric frame, when he went with his regiment to the West Indies. The only station that he would thoroughly have become, would have been that of abbot in some snug Benedictine abbey, where the rule was comfortably relaxed; in such a station, where the habit would just have imposed the restraint he needed, he would have made monks, tenants, dependants, and guests all as happy as indulgence, easy good-nature, and hearty hospitality could make them. As it was, flesh of a better grain never went

to the land-crabs, largely as in those days they were fed.

There was another person in the remove, who, when he allowed himself time for such idle entertainment, was as fond of Blair's conversation as I was (our intercourse with him was only during school-hours), but to whom I was attached by sympathies of a better kind. This was William Bean, the son of an apothecary at Camberwell, from which place he walked every day to school, a distance of more than three miles to and fro. He had a little of the cockney pronunciation, for which Blair used to laugh at him and mimic him; his appearance was odd, as well as remarkable, and made the worse by his dress. One day when he had gone into the boarding-house with me, Dickenson (the present member for Somersetshire, a good-natured man) came into the room; and fixing his eyes upon him, exclaimed with genuine surprise, "O you cursed quiz, what is your name?" One Sunday afternoon, when with my two most intimate associates (Combe and Lambe) I had been taking a long ramble on the Surrey side of the river, we met Bean somewhere near the Elephant and Castle returning home from a visit, in his Sunday's suit of dittos, and in a cocked-hat to boot. However contented he might have been in this costume, I believe that, rather than have been seen in it by us, he would have been glad if the earth had opened, and he could have gone down for five minutes to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. However, the next morning, when he threw himself upon our mercy, and entreated that we would not say that we had

met him in a *cock and pinch,* my companions promised him, as willingly as I did, to be silent.

With this quizzical appearance, there were in Bean's swarthy face, and in his dark eyes, the strongest indications of a clear intellect, a steady mind, and an excellent heart; all which he had in perfection. He had been placed at Westminster in the hope of his getting into college; but being a day scholar, and having no connections acquainted with the school, he had not been put in the way of doing this, so that when the time came for what is called *standing out,* while all the other candidates were in the usual manner crammed by their helps, Bean stood alone, without assistance, and consequently failed. Had the mode of examination been what it ought to be, a fair trial of capacity and diligence, in which no cramming was allowed, his success would have been certain; and had he gone off from Westminster to either University, he would most certainly have become one of the most distinguished men there; every thing might have been expected from him that could result from the best capacity, and the best conduct. But he failed, and was immediately taken from school to learn his father's profession. I had too sincere a regard for him to lose sight of him thus; and several times in summer afternoons, when the time allowed, walked to Camberwell Green just to see and shake hands with him, and hurry back. And this I continued to do as long as I remained at Westminster.

In 1797 or 1798, he stopped me one day in the street, saying he did not wonder that I should have passed

without recognising him, for he had had the yellow fever three times, and not having long recovered, still bore strong vestiges of it in his complexion. He had gone into the army in his professional line, and had just then returned from the West Indies. I never saw him more. But going along Camberwell Green some ten years ago, and seeing the name still over the door, I went in and inquired for him of his brother, who immediately remembered my name, and told me that William had been doing well in the East Indies, and that they soon hoped for his return; upon which I left a message for him to be communicated in their next letter, and my direction, whenever he might arrive. Shortly after this I became acquainted with poor Nash, whose father's house was nearly opposite to Bean's; and to my great pleasure I found that Nash knew him well, had seen him at Bombay, and spoke of him as having proved just such a man as I should have expected, that is, of sterling sense and sterling worth. You may imagine how I was shocked at learning subsequently, through the same channel, what had been his fate. Tidings had been received, that going somewhere by sea (about Malacca I think) upon a short passage, with money for his regiment, of which he acted as pay-master at that time, for the sake of that money he had been murdered by the Malay boatmen.

He had saved 5000*l.* or 6000*l.* which he left to his mother, an unhappy and unworthy woman who had forsaken her family, but still retained a strong affection for this eldest son; and wished, when he was a boy, to withdraw him from his father. With

that view she came one day to Westminster, and waited in the cloisters to way-lay him when the school was over. A scene ensued which was truly distressing to those who felt as they ought to do, for he flew from her, and both were so much agitated as to act and speak as if there had been no spectators. I was not present, but what I heard of it strengthened my regard for him; and I had his situation with respect to his mother in my mind when certain passages in Roderick were written.

Dr. Pinckland has mentioned him with respect in his notes on the West Indies, as one of the assistants in some military hospital in which the doctor was employed. I was pleased at meeting with this brief and incidental notice of his name while he was yet living, though with a melancholy feeling that the abler man was in the subordinate station. That brief notice is the only memorial of one, who, if he had not been thus miserably cut off, would probably have left some durable monument of himself: for during twenty years of service in all parts of the globe, he had seen much, and I have never known any man who would more certainly have seen all things in the right point of view, morally as well as intellectually. Had he returned I should have invited him hither, and he would have come; we should have met like men who had answered each other's expectations, and whom years and various fortunes, instead of alienating, had drawn nearer in heart and in mind. That meeting will take place in a better world.

THE

LIFE AND CORRESPONDENCE

OF

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

CHAPTER I.

SCHOOL FRIENDSHIPS. — THE FLAGELLANT. — IS COMPELLED TO LEAVE WESTMINSTER. — WRECK OF HIS FATHER'S AFFAIRS AND HIS DEATH. — IS REFUSED ADMITTANCE AT CHRIST CHURCH, AND ENTERS AT BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD. — COLLEGE LIFE. — HIS STUDIES. — PHILOSOPHICAL SPECULATIONS. — EXCURSION TO HEREFORDSHIRE. — VISIT TO BRIXTON. — JOAN OF ARC. — RETURN TO BRISTOL. — LETTERS ON A UNIVERSITY LIFE, ETC. — FITS OF DESPONDENCY. — POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY. — MR. LOVEL. — AMERICA. — NUMBER OF VERSES DESTROYED AND PRESERVED. — A.D. 1791—1793.

My father has entered so fully into the history of his family and the details of his early life, that it is only needful for me to take up the thread of the narrative where he has laid it down. I cannot, however, but regret that he had not at least completed the account of his schoolboy days, and given us a little more insight into the course of his studies, feelings, and opinions, at that period, and also into

the origin of those more lasting friendships he formed during the latter part of his stay at Westminster.

But, while it may justly be regretted that he has not carried down his autobiography to a later date, it is not much to be wondered at that he found the task becoming more difficult and more painful. Recollections must have crowded upon his mind almost faster than he could arrange and relate them (as we perceive they had already done, from the many collateral histories into which he has diverged), and he was coming to that period of his life, which of all others it would have been most difficult for him accurately to record. He had, indeed, in early life often contemplated "writing the history of his own mind," and had imagined that it would be the most pleasing and the most profitable task he could engage in; but he probably found it was more agreeable in anticipation than in reality, and when once the thread was broken, he seems neither to have found time nor inclination to resume it.

He has spoken of his early Westminster acquaintances, but he has not mentioned the two chief friendships he formed there, apparently not having come to the time when they had commenced; these were with Mr. C. W. W. Wynn, and Mr. Grosvenor Charles Bedford (late of the Exchequer), with whom he seems at school to have been on terms of the closest intimacy, and who continued through life among his most valuable friends. That even long prior to his going to Westminster, he had found his chief pleasure in his pen, and that he had both read and written largely, he has himself recorded,

and he has also mentioned his having made an unsuccessful attempt to obtain admission for one of his youthful compositions in a Westminster Magazine called "The Trifler," which appears to have had only a brief existence. It was not long, however, before he found an opportunity of making his first essay in print, which proved not a little unfortunate in its results. Having attained the upper classes of the school, in conjunction with several of his more particular friends, he set on foot a periodical entitled "The Flagellant," which reached only nine numbers, when a sarcastic attack upon corporal punishment, as then inflicted, it seems, somewhat unsparingly at Westminster, roused the wrath of Dr. Vincent, the head master, who immediately commenced a prosecution for libel against the publisher.

This seems to have been a harsh and extraordinary proceeding; for the master's authority, judiciously exercised, might surely have controlled or stopped the publication; neither was there any thing in the paper itself which ought to have made a wise man angry; like most of the others, it is merely a schoolboy's imitation of a paper in the Spectator or Rambler. A letter of complaint from an unfortunate victim to the rod is supposed to have been called forth by the previous numbers, and the writer now comments on this, and enters into a dissertation on flogging with various quotations, ascribing its invention to the author of all evil. The signature was a feigned one; but my father immediately acknowledged himself the writer, and reluctantly apologised. The Doctor's

wrath, however, was not to be appeased, and he was compelled to leave the school.

Having quitted Westminster under these untoward circumstances early in the spring of the year 1792, he remained until the close of it as usual with his aunt, Miss Tyler, in the College Green, Bristol; and there, partly from want of regular employment and society, partly from his naturally excitable disposition, we find him in every imaginable mood of mind; now giving way to fits of despondency, revolving first one scheme of future life and then another, and again brightening up under the influence of a buoyant and happy temper, continually writing verses, and eager again to come before the public as an author, despite the unfortunate issue of his first attempt.

"The Flagellant is gone," he writes at this time to his schoolfellow and coadjutor in that luckless undertaking, Mr. Grosvenor Bedford; "still, however, I think that our joint productions may acquire some credit. The sooner we have a volume published the better; 'The Medley,' 'The Hodge Podge,' 'The What-do-you-call-it,' or, to retain our old plan, 'Monastic Lucubrations;' any of these, or any better you may propose, will do. Shall we dedicate it to Envy, Hatred, and Malice, and all Uncharitableness? Powerful arbitrators of the minds of men, who have already honoured us with your marked attention, ye who can convert innocence into treason, and, shielded by the arm of power, remain secure, &c. &c. &c.; or shall we dedicate it to the doctor, or to the devil, or to the king, or to ourselves?—Gentlemen, to you in whose breasts neither envy nor malice can find a

place, who will not be biassed by the clamours of popular prejudice, nor stoop to the authority of ignorance and power, &c. &c.

"I see no reason why we should nôt publish pretty soon; it will be at least four months before we can prepare it for the press, and, surely, by that time we may venture again upon the world.

> ". . . . . We have ventured,
> Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
> These last nine numbers in a sea of glory,
> But far above our depth; the high blown bubble
> At length burst under us, and now has left us
> (Yet smarting from the rod of persecution
> Though yet unwearied) to the merciless rage
> Of the rude sea that swallowed Number Five."

These boyish schemes, however, were not to be carried into effect; and "the wreck of his father's affairs," to which he has alluded in the Autobiography, taking place at this time, he was occupied for a while by some of the more painful realities of life. "Since my last," he writes again to Mr. Bedford, "I have been continually going backwards and forwards upon business, which would not allow me to fix sufficient attention upon anything else. It is now over. I have time to look about me; I hope with fairer prospects for the future. One of my journeys was to my father's brother at Taunton, to request him to assist my father to recover that situation into which the treachery of his relations and injustice of his friends had thrown him. I had never seen this uncle, and you may guess how unpleasant so humiliating an errand must prove to so proud a spirit. He was absent: I left a letter, and two days ago received an answer and a refusal. Fortunately

my aunt had prevented the necessity; but her goodness does not extenuate his unnatural parsimony. He is single, and possessed of property to the amount of 100,000*l.*, without a child to provide for: that part of his fortune which he inherited must one day be mine; it will, I hope, enable me to despise the world and live independent."*

But his father's health was now completely broken by his misfortunes: he sank rapidly; and my father having gone up to matriculate at Oxford, was only recalled in time to follow him to the grave.

It had been intended that he should enter at Christ Church, and his name had been put down there for some time; but the dean (Cyril Jackson), having heard of the affair of the Flagellant, refused to admit him, doubtless supposing he would prove a troublesome and disaffected undergraduate, and little dreaming the time would come when the University would be proud to bestow on him her highest honours.

Having been rejected at Christ Church he entered at Balliol College †, and returned to his home at Miss Tyler's, to remain there till the time when his residence at Oxford should commence. The following letter will illustrate sufficiently his character at this period.

* Oct. 21. 1792.

† The following is extracted from the Register of Admissions at Balliol College:—

"Termino Michaelis, 1792. Nov. 3.
Robertus Southey Filius natu maximus Roberti Southey
Generosi de Civitate Bristol; Admissus est
Commensalis."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

(With a rude sketch of a church.)

"Nov. 20. 1792.

" My dear Bedford,

I doubt not but you will be surprised at my sending a church neither remarkable for beauty of design or neatness of execution. Waiving, however, all apologies for either, if you are disposed at some future time to visit the 'Verdant House' of your friend when he shall be at supper, — 'not when he eats, but when he is eaten,' — you will find it on the other side of this identical church. The very covering of the vault affords as striking an emblem of mortality as would even the mouldering tenant of the tomb. Yesterday, I know not from what strange humour, I visited it for the second time in my life; the former occasion was mournful, and no earthly consideration shall ever draw me there upon a like. My pilgrimage yesterday was merely the result of a meditating moment when philosophy had flattered itself into apathy. I am really astonished when I reflect upon the indifference with which I so minutely surveyed the heaving turf, which inclosed within its cold bosom ancestors upon whom fortune bestowed rather more of her smiles than she has done upon their decendants,—men who, content with an independent patrimony, lay hid from the world too obscure to be noticed by it, too elevated to fear its insult. Those days are past. Three Edward Hills there sleep for ever. I send the epitaph which, at

present, is inscribed upon one of the cankered sides: perhaps the production of some one of my forefathers, who possessed more piety than poetry: —

'Farwell this world
With all Its Vanity;
We hope, through Christ,
To live eternally.'

"You have the exact orthography, and the inscription will probably cover the remains of one who has written so much for others, and must be content with so humble an epitaph himself, unless you will furnish him with one more characteristical.

"Were you to walk over the village (Ashton) with me, you would, like me, be tempted to repine that I have no earthly mansion here,—it is the most enchanting spot that nature can produce. My rambles would be much more frequent, were it not for certain reflections, not altogether of a pleasant nature, which always recur. I cannot wander like a stranger over lands which once were my forefathers', nor pass those doors which are now no more open, without feeling emotions altogether inconsistent with pleasure and irreconcileable with the indifference of philosophy.

"What is there, Bedford, contained in that word of such mighty virtue? it has been sounded in the ear of common sense till it is deafened and overpowered with the clamour. Artifice and vanity have reared up the pageant, science has adorned it, and the multitude have beheld at a distance and adored; it is applied indiscriminately to vice and virtue, to the exalted ideas of Socrates, the metaphysical charms of Plato, the frigid maxims of Aristotle, the unfeeling dictates of the Stoics, and the disciples of the

defamed Epicurus. Rousseau was called a philosopher whilst he possessed sensibility the most poignant. Voltaire was dignified with the name when he deserved the blackest stigma from every man of principle. Whence all this seeming absurdity? or why should reason be dazzled by the name when she cannot but perceive its imbecility?

"So far I wrote last night; upon running it over, I think you will fancy you have a rhapsody for the Flagellant instead of a letter; and really, had I continued it in the same mood, it would have been little different. If I had any knowledge of drawing, I would send you some of the most pleasing views you can conceive, whether rural, melancholy, pleasing, or grand. At some future period I hope to show you the place, and you will then judge whether I have praised it too lavishly. . . . . In the course of next summer the Duke of Portland will be installed at Oxford: the spectacle is only inferior to a coronation. I have rooms there, and am glad of the opportunity to offer them to you. We are permitted to have men in college upon the occasion: the whole university makes up the procession. It will be worth seeing, as perhaps coronations, like the secular games, will soon be as a tale that is told.

"Within this half hour I have received a letter from my uncle at Lisbon, chiefly upon a subject which I have been much employed upon since March 1. I will show it you when we meet. It is such as I expected from one who has been to me more than a parent: without asperity, without reproaches. . . . . To-morrow I answer it, and, as he has desired, send

him the Flagellant. I then hope to drop the subject for ever in this world; in the next all hearts are open, and no man's intentions are hid.

"I can now tell you one of the uses of philosophy: it teaches us to search for applause from within, and to despise the flattery and the abuse of the world alike; to attend only to an inward monitor; to be superior to fortune: why, then, is the name so prostituted? Do give me a lecture upon philosophy, and teach me how to become a philosopher. The title is pretty, and surely the philosophic S. would sound as well as the philosophic Hume or the philosopher of Ferney. Would it not be as truly applied? I am loth to part with my poor Flagellants; they have cost me very dear, and perhaps I shall never see them more.* One copy ought to be preserved, in order to contradict the inventions of future malice. Are you not ashamed of your idleness?

R. SOUTHEY."

"P. S. If I can one day have the honour of writing after my name Fellow of Balliol College, that will be the extent of my preferment. Sometimes I am tempted to think that I was sent into this world for a different employment; but, as the play says, beware of the beast that has three legs. Now, Bedford, as you might long puzzle to discover the genus of the beast, know that his grasp is always mortal, that — in short

* This proved to be the case: — he never saw the latter numbers of the Flagellant again. Mr. Hill preserved the copy which had been sent to him, but in after years kept it carefully from my father's knowledge, thinking he would destroy it. This copy is now before me, and is, perhaps, the only one in existence.

(here follows a sketch). But, as that drawing wants explanation as much, if not more, than the description, know it is — the gallows.

"About the 17th of January I begin my residence at Oxford, where the prime of my life is to pass in acquiring knowledge; which, when I begin to have some ideas of, it will be cut short by the Doctor, who levels all ranks and degrees. Is it not rather disgraceful, at the moment when Europe is on fire with freedom — when man and monarch are contending — to sit and study Euclid or Hugo Grotius? As Pindar says, a good button-maker is spoilt in making a king; what will be spoilt when I am made a fellow of Balliol? That question I cannot resolve. I can only say I have spoilt a sheet of paper, and you fifteen minutes in reading it.

"N.B. If you do not soon answer it, you will spoil my temper."

My father went up to reside at Balliol in January, 1793, being at this time ill suited to a college life both by his feelings and opinions. "My prepossessions," he writes, "are not very favourable; I expect to meet with pedantry, prejudice, and aristocracy, from all which good Lord deliver poor Robert Southey."* And almost immediately on his arrival: —"Behold me, my friend, entered under the banners of science or stupidity, — which you please, — and, like a recruit got sober, looking to the days that are past, and feeling something like regret. Would

* To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Dec. 1792.

you think it possible that the wise founders of an English university should forbid us to wear boots!* What matters it whether I study in shoes or boots? to me it is matter of indifference; but folly so ridiculous puts me out of conceit with the whole. When the foundation is bad, the fabric must be weak. None of my friends are yet arrived, and as for common acquaintance I do not wish for them. Solitude I do not dislike, for I fear it not; but there is a certain demon called Reflection that accompanies it, whose arrows, though they rankle not with the poison of guilt, are yet pointed by melancholy. I feel myself entered upon a new scene of life, and, whatever the generality of Oxonians conceive, it appears to me a very serious one. Four years hence I am to be called into orders, and during that time (short for the attainment of the requisite knowledge) how much have I to learn! I must learn to break a rebellious spirit, which neither authority nor oppression could ever bow; it would be easier to break my neck. I must learn to work a problem instead of writing an ode. I must learn to pay respect to men remarkable only for great wigs and little wisdom."†

He was indeed but little disposed to pay much deference either to the discipline or the etiquette of the College. It was usual for all the members to have their hair regularly dressed and powdered according to the prevailing fashion, and the College barber waited upon the "freshmen" as a matter of course.

* This law belongs to Balliol College, and is still, or was very lately, in force.

† To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq., Jan. 16. 1793.

My father, however, peremptorily refused to put himself under his hands; and I well remember his speaking of the astonishment depicted in the man's face, and of his earnest remonstrances, on the impropriety he was going to commit in entering the dining hall with his long hair*, which curled beautifully, in its primitive state. A little surprise was manifested at first, but the example was quickly followed by others.

It does not appear what particular course of reading he pursued while at the University; but one of his college friends declares that he was a perfect "helluo librorum" then as well as throughout his life; and among his diversified writings there is abundant evidence that he had drunk deeply both of the Greek and Latin poets.

His letters, which at this time seem to have been exercises in composition, give evidence of his industry, and at the same time indicate a mind imbued with heathen philosophy and Grecian republicanism. They are written often in a style of inflated declamation, which, as we shall see, before many years had passed, subsided into a more natural and tranquil tone under the influence of his matured taste.

A few of these are here laid before the reader.

To G. C. Bedford, Esq.

"Friday, Jan. 25. 1793, 6 in the evening.

"Such is the hour when I begin this letter,—when it will be finished is uncertain: expecting Wynn to

* There is a portrait of my father engraved in Mr. Cottle's Reminiscences, which shows the long hair, &c.

drink tea with me every moment, I have not patience to wait without employment, and know of none more agreeable than that of writing to you. My Mentor, while he prohibits my writing, must nevertheless allow an exception in your favour; and believe me I look upon it as one great proof of my own reformation, or whatever title you may please to give, when I can pass a whole week without composing one word. Over the pages of the philosophic Tacitus the hours of study pass as rapidly as even those which are devoted to my friends, and I have not found as yet one hour which I could wish to have employed otherwise: this is saying very much in praise of a collegiate life; but remember that a mind disposed to be happy will find happiness everywhere; and why we should not be happy is beyond my philosophy to account for. Heraclitus certainly was a fool, and, what is much more rare, an unhappy one. I never yet met with any fool who was not pleased with the idea of his own sense; but for your whimpering sages, let sentiment say what it will, they are men possessed with more envy than wisdom."

To G. C. Bedford, Esq.

"Saturday, Feb. 12., 5 in the morning.

"Now, Bedford, this is more than you would do for me,—quit your bed after only five hours' rest, light a fire, and then write a letter; really I think it would not have tempted me to rise unless assisted by other inducements. To-day I am going to walk to Abingdon with three men of this college; and having made the pious resolution (your good health in a glass of

red negus) of rising every morning at five to study, that the rest of the day may be at my own disposal, I procured an alarum clock and a tinder-box. This morning was the first. I rose, called up a neighbour, and read about three hundred lines of Homer, when I found myself hungry; the bread and cheese were called in as auxiliaries, and I made some negus: as I spiced it my eye glanced over the board, and the assemblage seemed so curious that I laid all aside for your letter,—a lexicon, Homer, inkstand, candles, snuffers, wine, bread and cheese, nutmeg grater, and hour-glass. But I have given up time enough to my letter, the glass runs fast, and for once the expression is not merely figurative.

"Monday.

"How rapidly does Time hasten on when his wings are not clogged by melancholy! Perhaps no human being ever more forcibly experienced this than myself; often have I counted the hours with impatience when, tired of reflection and all her unpleasant train, I wished to forget myself in sleep. Now I allow but six hours to my bed, and every morning before the watchman rises, my fire is kindled and my bed cold: this is practical philosophy — but every thing is valued by comparison, and when compared with my neighbour, I am no philosopher. Two years ago Seward drank wine, and eat butter and sugar; now, merely from the resolution of abridging the luxuries of life, water is his only drink, tea and dry bread his only breakfast. In one who professed philosophy this would be only practising its tenets, but it is quite different with Seward. To the most odd and uncommon ap-

pearance he adds manners, which, as one gets accustomed to them are the most pleasing. At the age of fourteen he began learning, and the really useful knowledge he possesses must be imputed to a mind really desirous of improvement. 'Do you not find your attention flag?' I said to him as he was studying Hutchinson's Moral Philosophy in Latin. 'If our tutors would but make our studies interesting we should pursue them with pleasure.' 'Certainly we should,' he replied; 'but I feel a pleasure in studying them because I know it is my duty.' This I take to be true philosophy, of that species which tends to make mankind happy, because it first makes them good. We had verses here upon the 30th of January to the memory of Charles the Martyr. It is a little extraordinary that you should quote those very lines to poor Louis which I prefixed to my ode: 'His virtues plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against the deep damnation of his taking off.' .... Morose austerity and stern enthusiasm are the characteristics of superstition; but what is in reality more cheerful or happy than Religion? I have in my own knowledge more than one instance of this, and doubt not you have likewise. Ought not, therefore, that wretch who styles himself a philosopher to be shunned like pestilence, who, because Christianity has to him no allurement, seeks to deprive the miserable of their only remaining consolation? .... I keep a daily journal for myself, as an account of time which I ought to be strict in; but this being only destined for my own eye, is uninteresting and unimportant. Boswell might compile a few quartos from the loose memorandums,

but they would tire the world more than he has already done. Twenty years hence this journal will be either a source of pleasure or of regret; that is, if I live twenty years, and for life I have really a very strong predilection; not from Shakspeare's fearfully beautiful passage:—'Aye, but to die and go we know not whither,' but from the hope that my life may be serviceable to my family, and happy to myself; if it be the longer life the better, existence will be delightful, and anticipation glorious. The idea of meeting a different fate in another world is enough to overthrow every Atheistical doctrine. The very dreadful trials under which virtue so often labours must surely be only trials; patience will withstand the pressure, and faith will lead to hope. Religion soothes every wound and makes the bed of death a couch of felicity. Make the contrast yourself: look at the warrior, the hypocrite, and the libertine, in their last moments, and reflection must strengthen every virtuous resolution. May I, however, practise what I preach. Let me have 200*l.* a year and the comforts of domestic life, and my ambition aspires not further.

Most sincerely yours,
ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To G. C. Bedford, Esq.

"March 16. 1793.

"I am now sitting without fire in a cold day, waiting for Wynn to go upon the Isis, 'silver-slippered queen,' as Warton calls her; the epithet may be

classical, but it certainly is ridiculous. Of all poetical figures the prosopopœia is that most likely to be adopted by a savage nation, and which adds most ornament, but not to composition; but in the name of common sense, what appropriate idea does 'silver-slippered' convey? Homer's Χρυσοπέδιλος* probably alludes to some well-known statue so habited. Nature is a much better guide than antiquity.

"Wednesday.

"On the water I went yesterday, in a little skiff, which the least deviation from the balance would oversett To manage two oars and yet unable to handle one!† My first setting off was curious. I did not step exactly in the middle, the boat tilted up, and a large barge from which I embarked alone saved me from a good ducking; my arm, however, got completely wet. I tugged at the oar very much like a bear in a boat; or, if you can conceive any thing more awkward, liken me to it, and you will have a better simile. . . . . When I walk over these streets what various recollections throng upon me, what scenes fancy delineates from the hour when Alfred first marked it as the seat of learning! Bacon's study is demolished, so I shall never have the honour of being killed by its fall; before my window Latimer and Ridley were burnt, and there is not even a stone to mark the place where a monument should be erected

* "Αργυρόπεζα" would have been nearer the mark. Warton was imitating Milton, who uses the term "tinsel-slippered."

† My father used to say he learned two things only at Oxford,—to row and to swim.

to religious liberty. . . . . I have walked over the ruins of Godstow Nunnery with sensations such as the site of Troy or Carthage would inspire; a spot so famed by our minstrels, so celebrated by tradition, and so memorable in the annals of legendary, yet romantic truth. Poor Rosamond! some unskilful impostor has painted an epitaph upon the chapel wall, evidently within this century; the precise spot where she lies is forgotten, and the traces are still visible of a subterranean passage—perhaps the scene of many a deed of darkness; but we should suppose the best:—surely amongst the tribe who were secluded from the world, there may have been some whose motives were good among so many victims of compulsion and injustice. Do you recollect Richardson's plan for Protestant nunneries?* To monastic foundations I have little attachment; but were the Colleges ever to be reformed (and reformation will not come before it is wanted), I would have a little more of the discipline kept up. Temperance is much wanted; the waters of Helicon are far too much polluted by the wine of Bacchus ever to produce any effect. With respect to its superiors, Oxford only exhibits waste of wigs and want of wisdom; with respect to undergraduates, every species of abandoned excess.

* "Considering the condition of single women in the middle classes, it is not speaking too strongly to assert that the establishment of Protestant nunneries upon a wide plan, and liberal scale, would be the greatest benefit that could possibly be conferred upon these kingdoms. The name, indeed, is deservedly obnoxious, for nunneries, such as they exist in Roman Catholic countries, and such as at this time are being re-established in this, are connected with the worst corruptions of popery, being only nurseries of superstition and of misery."—*Southey's Colloquies*, vol. i. p. 338.

As for me, I regard myself too much to run into the vices so common and so destructive. I have not yet been drunk, nor mean to be so. What use can be made of a collegiate life I wish to make; but in the midst of all, when I look back to Rousseau, and compare myself either with his Emilius or the real pupil of Madame Brulenck, I feel ashamed and humbled at the comparison. Never shall child of mine enter a public school or a university. Perhaps I may not be able so well to instruct him in logic or languages, but I can at least preserve him from vice.

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To Charles Collins, Esq.

" Ledbury, Herefordshire; Easter Sunday, 1793.

" Had I, my dear Collins, the pen of Rousseau, I would attempt to describe the various scenes which have presented themselves to me, and the various emotions occasioned by them. On Wednesday morning, about eight o'clock, we sallied forth. My travelling equipage consisted of my diary, writing-book, pen, ink, silk handkerchief, and Milton's Defence. We reached Woodstock to breakfast, where I was delighted with reading the Nottingham address for peace. Perhaps you will call it stupidity which made me pass the very walls of Blenheim, without turning from the road to behold the ducal palace: perhaps it was so; but it was the stupidity of a democratic philosopher who had appointed a day in summer for the purpose. . . . . Evesham Abbey detained me

some time: it was here where Edward defeated and slew Simon de Montfort. Often did I wish for your pencil, for never did I behold so beautiful a pile of ruins. I have seen the Abbeys of Battle and Malmsbury, but this is a complete specimen of the simple Gothic: a tower, quite complete, fronts the church, whose roof is dropping down, and admits through the chasm the streaming light,—the high pointed window frames, where the high grass waves to the lonely breeze,—and that beautiful moss, which at once ornaments and carpets the monastic pile, rapt me to other years. I recalled the savage sons of superstition, I heard the deep toned mass, and the chaunted prayer for those that fell in fight; but fancy soon recurred to a more enchanting scene,—'The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green and his Daughter': you know how intimately connected with this now mouldering scene that ballad is. Over this abbey I could detain you, Collins, for ever,—so many, so various, are the reveries it caused. We reached Worcester to dinner the second day. .... Here we staid three days; and I rode with Mr. Severn to Kidderminster, with intent to breakfast at ——, but all the family were out. We returned by Bewdley; there is an old mansion, once Lord Herbert's, now mouldering away, in so romantic a situation, that I soon lost myself in dreams of days of yore, — the tapestried room — the listed fight — the vassal-filled hall — the hospitable fire — the old baron and his young daughter; — these formed a most delightful day-dream. How horrid it is to wake into common life from these scenes! at a moment when you are transported to

happier times to descend to realities! Could these visions last for ever! Yesterday we walked twenty-five miles over Malvern Hills to Ledbury, to Seward's brothers; here I am before breakfast, and how soon to be interrupted I know not. Believe me, I shall return reluctantly to Oxford; these last ten days seem like years to look back — so crowded with different pictures. . . . . This peripatetic philosophy pleases me more and more; the twenty-six miles I walked yesterday neither fatigued me then nor now. Who, in the name of common sense, would travel stewed in a leathern box when they have legs, and those none of the shortest, fit for use? What scene can be more calculated to expand the soul than the sight of nature, in all her loveliest works? We must walk over Scotland; it will be an adventure to delight us all the remainder of our lives: we will wander over the hills of Morven, and mark the driving blast, perchance bestrodden by the spirit of Ossian."

On his return to Balliol he writes to another friend thus characteristically, affording a curious picture of his own mind at this time.

"My dear Grosvenor, "April 4. 1793.

"My philosophy, which has so long been of a kind peculiar to myself — neither of the school of Plato, Aristotle, Westminster, or the Miller — is at length settled: I am become a peripatetic philosopher. Far, however, from adopting the tenets of any self-sufficient cynic or puzzling sophist, my sentiments will be found more enlivened by the brilliant

colours of fancy, nature, and Rousseau than the positive dogmas of the Stagyrite, or the metaphysical refinements of his antagonist. I aspire not to the honorary titles of subtle disputant or divine doctor, I wish to found no school, to drive no scholars mad: ideas rise up with the scenes I view; some pass away with the momentary glance, some are engraved upon the tablet of memory, and some impressed upon the heart. You have told me what philosophy is not, and I can give you a little more information upon the subject. It is not reading Johannes Secundus because he may have some poetical lines; it is not wearing the hair undressed, in opposition to custom perhaps (this I feel the severity of, and blush for); it is not rejecting Lucan lest he should vitiate the taste, and reading without fear what may corrupt the heart; it is not clapt on with a wig, or communicated by the fashionable hand of the barber. It had nothing to do with Watson when he burnt his books; it does not sit upon a woolsack; honour cannot bestow it, persecution cannot take it away. It illumined the prison of Socrates, but fled the triumph of Octavius: it shrank from the savage murderer, Constantine; it dignified the tent of Julian. It has no particular love for colleges; in crowds it is alone, in solitude most engaged; it renders life agreeable, and death enviable. . . . I have lately read the 'Man of Feeling:' if you have never yet read it, do now from my recommendation; few works have ever pleased me so painfully or so much. It is very strange that man should be delighted with the highest pain that can be produced. I even begin to think

that both pain and pleasure exist only in idea. But this must not be affirmed; the first twinge of the toothache, or retrospective glance, will undeceive me with a vengeance.

"Purity of mind is something like snow, best in the shade. Gibraltar is on a rock, but it would be imprudent to defy her enemies, and call them to the charge. My heart is equally easy of impression with that of Rousseau, and perhaps more tenacious of it. Refinement I adore, but to me the highest delicacy appears so intimately connected with it, that the union is like body and soul."

And again, a few weeks afterwards, he says, in reference to some observations which had been made as to his not sufficiently cultivating his abilities: "Wynn accuses me of want of ambition; the accusation gave me great pleasure. He wants me to wish distinction, and to seek it. I want it not, I wish it not. The abilities which nature gave me, which fashion has not cramped, and which vanity often magnifies, are never neglected. I will cultivate them with diligence, but only for my friends; if I can bring myself sometimes to their remembrance, I have attained the ne plus ultra of my ambition."*

The early part of the long vacation was spent in an excursion into Herefordshire to visit a college friend. "Like the Wandering Jew," he writes from thence, "you see I am here and there, and every where; now tramping it to Worcester, now peripateticating it to Cambridge, and now an equestrian in

* To G. C. Bedford, May 6. 1793.

the land of cyder,—traversing the shores of the Wye, and riding listlessly over the spot where Ariconium stood, walking above the dusty tombs of my progenitors in the cathedral."*

In the following month (August) he went to visit his old schoolfellow and constant correspondent, Mr. Grosvenor Bedford, who then resided with his parent at Brixton Causeway, four miles on the Surrey side of the metropolis; and there, the day after completing his nineteenth year, he resumed, and, in six weeks, completed, his poem of Joan of Arc, the subject of which had been previously suggested to him in conversation with Mr. Bedford, and of which he had then written above three hundred lines. In one of the prefaces to the collected edition of his poems, he says, "My progress would not have been so rapid had it not been for the opportunity of retirement which I enjoyed there, and the encouragement I received. Tranquil, indeed, the place was, for the neighbourhood did not extend beyond half a dozen families, and the London style and habits of life had not obtained among them. Uncle Toby might have enjoyed his rood and a half of ground there, and not have had it known. A forecourt separated the house from the footpath and the road in front; behind these was a large and well-stocked garden, with other spacious premises, in which utility and ornament were in some degree combined. At the extremity of the garden, and under the shade of four lofty Linden trees, was a

* To Grosvenor C. Bedford, July 31. 179[illegible].

summer house, looking on an ornamented grass plat, and fitted up as a conveniently habitable room. That summer-house was allotted to me, and there my mornings were passed at the desk."

Three months were most happily spent here in various amusements and occupations, of which writing Joan of Arc was the chief: but the poetical bow was not always bent; a war of extermination was carried on against the wasps, which abounded in unwonted numbers, and which they exercised their skill in shooting with horse-pistols loaded with sand, the only sort of sporting, I have heard my father say, he ever attempted.

The following amusing letter was written soon after this visit.

To Grosvenor Charles Bedford, Esq.

"Bristol, Oct. 26. 1793.

"Never talk to me of obstinacy, for contrary to all the dictates of sound sense, long custom, and inclination, I have spoilt a sheet of paper by cutting it to the shape of your fancy. Accuse me not of irascibility, for I wrote to you ten days back, and though you have never vouchsafed me an answer, am now writing with all the mildness and goodness of a philosopher.

"Call me Job, for I am without clothes, expecting my baggage from day to day; and much as I fear its loss unrepining, own I am modest in assuming no merit for all these good qualities. Know then, most indolent of mortals, that my baggage is not yet ar-

rived, that I am fearful of its safety, and yet less troubled than all the rest of the family, who cry out loudly upon my puppet-show dress, and desire I will write to inquire concerning it. . . . . .

"Now I am much inclined to fill this sheet, and that with verse, but I will punish myself to torment you: you shall have half a prose letter. The College bells are dinning the King's proclamation in my ear, the linings of my breeches are torn, you are silent, and all this makes me talkative and angrily communicative; so that had you merited it, you would have received such a letter,—so philosophic, poetical, grave, erudite, amusing, instructive, elegant, simple, delightful, simplex munditiis,—in short, *το αγαθον και το αριστον, το βελτιστον*— such a letter, Grosvenor, full of odes, elegiacs, epistles, monodramas, comodramas, tragodramas, all sorts of dramas, though I have not tasted spirits to-day. Don't think me drunk, for if I am, 'tis with sobriety; and I certainly feel most seriously disposed to be soberly nonsensical. Now you wish I would dispose my folly to a short series; which sentence if you comprehend, you will do more than I can. You must not be surprised at nonsense, for I have been reading the history of philosophy, the ideas of Plato, the logic of Aristotle, and the heterogeneous dogmas of Pythagoras, Antisthenes, Zeno, Epicurus, and Pyrrho, till I have metaphysicized away all my senses, and so you are the better for it. . . .

"Now good night! Egregious nonsense, execrably written, is all you merit. O my clothes! O Joan!"*

* The first MS. of Joan of Arc was in his baggage.

"Sunday morning.

"Now my friend, whether it be from the day itself, from the dull weather, or from the dream of last night, I know not, but I am a little more serious than when I laid down the pen. My baggage makes me very uneasy: the loss of what is intrinsically worth only the price of the paper would be more than ever I should find time, or perhaps ability, to repair; and even supposing some rascal should get them and publish them, I should be more vexed than at the utter loss. Do write immediately. I direct to you that you may have this the sooner. Inform me when you receive it, and with what direction. It is almost a fortnight since I left Brixton, and I am equipped in such old shirts, stockings, and shoes, as have been long cast off, and have lost all this time, in which I should have transcribed half of Joan. . . . .

"Of the various sects that once adorned the republic of Athens, to me that of Epicurus, whilst it maintained its original purity, appears most consonant to human reason. I am not speaking of his metaphysics and atomary system; they are (as all cosmogonies must be) ridiculous; but of that system of ethics and pleasure combined, which he taught in the garden. When the philosopher declared that the ultimate design of life is happiness, and happiness consists in virtue, he laid the foundation of a system which might have benefited mankind; his life was the most temperate, his manner the most affable, displaying that urbanity which cannot fail of attracting esteem. Plotinus, a man memorable for corrupting philosophy, was in

favour with Gallienus, with whose imperial qualifications you are well acquainted: the enthusiast requested his *royal highness* would give him a ruined city in Campania, which he might rebuild and people with philosophers, governed by the laws of Plato, and from whom the city should be called Platonopolis. Gallienus, who was himself an elegant scholar, was pleased with the plan, but his friends dissuaded him from the experiment. The design would certainly have proved impracticable in that declining and degenerate age — most probably in any age; new visionary enthusiasts would have been continually arising, fresh sects formed, and each would have been divided and subdivided till all was anarchy. Yet I cannot help wishing the experiment had been tried; it could not have been productive of evil, and we might at this period have received instruction from the history of Platonopolis. Under the Antonines or under Julian the request would have been granted; despotism is perhaps a blessing under such men. . . . . I could rhapsodise most delightfully upon this subject; plan out my city — her palaces, her hovels — all simplex munditiis (my favourite quotation); but if you were with me, Southeyopolis would soon be divided into two sects; whilst I should be governing with Plato (correcting a few of Plato's absurdities with some of my own), and almost deifying Alcæus, Lucan, and Milton, you (as visionary as myself) would be dreaming of utopian kings possessed of the virtue of the Antonines, regulated by peers every one of whom should be a Falkland, and by a popular assembly where

every man should unite the integrity of a Cato, the eloquence of a Demosthenes, and the loyalty of a Jacobite.

Yours most sincerely,
R. S."

For some reason which does not appear, he did not reside during the following term at Balliol, and the latter part of the year was consequently passed at Bristol at Miss Tyler's. Some extracts from his letters will sufficiently illustrate this period.

"For once in my life I rejoiced that Grosvenor Bedford's paper was short, and his letter at the end. To suppose that I felt otherwise than grieved and indignant at the fate of the unfortunate Queen of France was supposing me a brute, and to request an avowal of what I felt implied a suspicion that I did not feel. You seemed glad, when arguments against the system of republicanism had failed, to grasp at the crimes of wretches who call themselves republicans, and stir up my feelings against my judgment." *

To another of his Westminster friends at Christ Church he writes: — "Remember me to Wynn. . . . I have much for his perusal; perhaps all my writings are owing to my acquaintance with him; he saw the first, and I knew the value of his praise too much to despise it. Wynn will like many parts of my Joan, but he will shake his head at the subject,

* Oct. 29. 1793.

and with propriety, if I had designed it for publication; but as the amusement of my leisure I heeded no laws but those of inclination. He will be better pleased to hear I have waded through the task of correcting and expunging my literary rubbish. There is something very vain in thus writing of myself, but I know that the regard which Wynn entertains for me, whilst he sees the vanity, will make him pleased with the intelligence." *

Soon afterwards he again refers to the then all engrossing topic of the day — the French Revolution; the heinous enormities of which were beginning a little to disturb his democratic views. "I am sick of this world, and discontented with every one in it. The murder of Brissot has completely harrowed up my faculties, and I begin to believe that virtue can only aspire to content in obscurity; for happiness is out of the question. I look round the world, and everywhere find the same mournful spectacle—the strong tyrannising over the weak, man and beast; the same depravity pervades the whole creation; oppression is triumphant everywhere, and the only difference is, that it acts in Turkey through the anger of a grand seignior, in France of a revolutionary tribunal, and in England of a prime minister. There is no place for virtue. Seneca was a visionary philosopher; even in the deserts of Arabia, the strongest will be the happiest, and the same rule holds good in Europe and in Abyssinia. Here are you and I theorising upon principles we can never practise, and wasting

* To Charles Collins, Esq., Bristol, Oct. 30. 1793.

our time and youth — you in scribbling parchments, and I in spoiling quires with poetry. I am ready to quarrel with my friends for not making me a carpenter, and with myself for devoting myself to pursuits certainly unimportant, and of no real utility either to myself or to others."*

In a letter to another friend, Horace Bedford, that heavy depression which the objectless nature of his life at this time brought upon him, is painfully shown.

"I read and write till my eyes ache, and still find time hanging as heavy round my neck as the stone round the neck of a drowning dog. . . . Nineteen years have elapsed since I set sail upon the ocean of life, in an ill-provided boat; the vessel weathered many a storm, and I took every distant cloud for land; still pushing for the Fortunate Islands, I discovered that they existed not for me, and that, like others wiser and better than myself, I must be content to wander about and never gain the port. — Nineteen years! certainly a fourth part of my life; perhaps how great a part; and yet I have been of no service to society. Why the clown who scares crows for twopence a day is a more useful member of society; he preserves the bread which I eat in idleness. . . . . Yesterday is just one year since I entered my name in the Vice Chancellor's book. It is a year of which I would wish to forget the transactions, could I only remember their effects;

* To Grosvenor Bedford Nov. 11. 1793.

my mind has been very much expanded; my hopes, I trust, extinguished: so adieu to hope and fear, but not to folly." *

Another letter to the same friend of a few days' later date, is written in a somewhat brighter mood.

To Horace Walpole Bedford, Esq.

(With verses.)

"College Green, Bristol, Nov. 13. 1793.

. . . . . .

"I lay down Leonidas to go on with your letter. It has ever been a favourite poem with me; I have read it, perhaps more frequently than any other compositic , and always with renewed pleasure: it possesses not the "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," but there is a something very different from those strong efforts of imagination, that please the judgment and feed the fancy without moving the heart. The interest I feel in the poem is, perhaps, chiefly owing to the subject, certainly the noblest ever undertaken. It needs no argument to prove this assertion.

Milton is above comparison, and stands alone as much from the singularity of the subject as the excellence of the diction: there remain Homer, Virgil, Lucan, Statius, S. Italicus, and V. Flaccus, among the ancients. I recollect no others, and amongst

* Nov. 3. 1793.

their subjects you will find none so interesting as the self-devoted Leonidas.

Among the moderns we know Ariosto, Tasso, Camoens, Voltaïre, and our own immortal Spenser; the other Italian authors in this line, and the Spanish ones, I know not. Indeed, that period of history upon which Glover's epics are founded is the grandest ever yet displayed. A constellation of such men never honoured mankind at any other time, or at least, never were called into the energy of action. Leonidas and his immortal band, — Æschylus, Themistocles, and Aristides the perfect republican, — even the satellites of Xerxes were dignified by Artemisia and the injured Spartan, Demaratus. To look back into the page of history — to be present at Thermopylæ, at Salamis, Platæa — to hear the songs of Æschylus and the lessons of Aristides — and then behold what Greece is — how fallen even below contempt — is one of the most miserable reflections the classic mind can endure. What a republic! What a province!

If this world did but contain ten thousand people of both sexes, visionary as myself, how delightfully would we repeople Greece, and turn out the Moslem. I would turn crusader and make a pilgrimage to Parnassus at the head of my republicans (N.B. only lawful head), and there reinstate the Muses in their original splendour. We would build a temple to Eleutherian Jove from the quarries of Paros — replant the grove of Academus; aye, and the garden of Epicurus, where your brother and I would commence teachers; yes, your brother, for if he would

not comb out the powder and fling away the poultice to embark in such an expedition, he deserves to be made a German elector or a West India planter. Charles Collins should occupy the chair of Plato, and hold forth to the Societas scientium literariorum Studiosorum, (not unaptly styled the 'Society of knowing ones'); and we would actually send for ——— to represent Euclid. Now could I lay down my whole plan — build my house in the prettiest Doric style — plant out the garden like Wolmer's, and imagine just such a family to walk in it, — when, here comes a rascal by crying 'Hare skins and rabbit skins,' and my poor house, which was built in the air, falls to pieces, and leaves me, like most visionary projectors, staring on disappointment.

. . . . . .

. When we meet at Oxford, which I hope we shall in January, there are a hundred things better communicated in conversation than by correspondence. I have no object of pursuit in life but to fill the passing hour, and fit myself for death; beyond these views I have nothing. To be of service to my friends would be serving myself most essentially; and there are few enterprises, however hazardous and however romantic, in which I would not willingly engage.

"It was the favourite intention of Cowley to retire with books to a cottage in America, and seek that happiness in solitude which he could not find in society. My asylum there would be sought for different reasons, (and no prospect in life gives me half the pleasure this visionary one affords); I should

be pleased to reside in a country where men's abilities would ensure respect; where society was upon a proper footing, and man was considered as more valuable than money; and where I could till the earth, and provide by honest industry the meat which my wife would dress with pleasing care — redeunt spectacula mane — reason comes with the end of the paper.

Yours most sincerely,
R. SOUTHEY."

To a proposal from Mr. Grosvenor Bedford to join with him in some publication, something I suppose after the manner of the Flagellant, he replies:—

"Your plan of a general satire I am ready to partake when you please. Pope, Swift, and Atterbury, you know, once attempted it, but malevolence intruded into the design, and Martin Scriblerus bore too strong a resemblance to Woodward. Swift's part is more levelled at follies than at vice; establish the empire of justice, and vice and folly will be annihilated together. Draw out your plan and send it me, if you have resolution for so arduous a task, — you know mine.

"I have plans lying by me enough for many years, or many lives. Yours, however, I shall be glad to engage in; whether it be the devil or not I know not, but my pen delights in lashing vice and folly."*

The following letters will conclude the year. In the latter one we have a curious picture of the mar-

* Nov. 22. 1793.

vellous industry with which he must have followed his poetical pursuits.

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Bath, Dec. 14. 1793.

"The gentleman who brings this letter must occupy a few lines of it. His name is Lovel: I know him but very little personally, though long by report; you must already see he is eccentric. Perhaps I do wrong in giving him this, but I wish your opinion of him. Those who are superficially acquainted with him feel wonder; those who know him, love. This character I hear. He is on the point of marrying a young woman with whom I spent great part of my younger years; we were bred up together I may almost say, and that period was the happiest of my life. Mr. Lovel has very great abilities; he writes well: in short, I wish his acquaintance myself; and, as his stay in town is very short, you will forgive the introduction. Perhaps you may rank him with Duppa, and, supposing excellence to be at 100, Duppa is certainly much above 50. Now, my dear Grosvenor, I doubt I am acting improperly; it was enough to introduce myself so rudely: but abilities always claim respect, and that Lovel has these I think very certain. Characters, if anyways marked, are well worth studying; and a young man of two-and-twenty, who has been his own master since fifteen, and who owes all his knowledge to himself, is so far a respectable character. My knowledge of

him, I again repeat, is very confined: his intended bride I look upon as almost a sister, and one should know one's brother-in-law. . . . .

"What is to become of me at ordination heaven only knows! After keeping the straight path so long the Test Act will be a stumbling-block to honesty; so chance and providence must take care of that, and I will fortify myself against chance. The wants of man are so very few that they must be attainable somewhere, and, whether here or in America, matters little; I have long learnt to look upon the world as my country.

"Now, if you are in the mood for a reverie, fancy only me in America; imagine my ground uncultivated since the creation, and see me wielding the axe, now to cut down the tree, and now the snakes that nestled in it. Then see me grubbing up the roots, and building a nice snug little dairy with them: three rooms in my cottage, and my only companion some poor negro whom I have bought on purpose to emancipate. After a hard day's toil, see me sleep upon rushes, and, in very bad weather, take out my casette and write to you, for you shall positively write to me in America. Do not imagine I shall leave rhyming or philosophising, so thus your friend will realise the romance of Cowley, and even outdo the seclusion of Rousseau; till at last comes an ill-looking Indian with a tomahawk, and scalps me,—a most melancholy proof that society is very bad, and that I shall have done very little to improve it! So vanity, vanity will come from my lips, and poor Southey will either be cooked for a Cherokee, or oysterised by a tiger.

"I have finished transcribing Joan, and bound her in marble paper with green ribbon, and now am about copying all my remainables to carry to Oxford. Thence once more a clear field, and then another epic poem, and then another, and so on, till Truth shall write on my tomb — 'Here lies an odd mortal, whose life only benefited the paper manufacturers, and whose death will only hurt the post-office.'

"Do send my great coat, &c. My distresses are so great that I want words to express the inconvenience I suffer. So as breakfast is not yet ready (it is almost nine o'clock), you shall have an ode to my great coat. Excellent subject, excellent trifler,— or blockhead, say you; but, Bedford, I must either be too trifling or too serious; the first can do no harm, and I know the last does no good. So come forth my book of Epistles."

To Horace Bedford, Esq.

"Dec. 22. 1793.

"I have accomplished a most arduous task, transcribing all my verses that appear worth the trouble, except letters; of these I took one list, — another of my pile of stuff and nonsense, — and a third of what I have burnt and lost; upon an average 10,000 verses are burnt and lost, the same number preserved, and 15,000 worthless. Consider that all my letters * are excluded, and you may judge what waste

* Many of his early letters are written in verse; often on four sides of folio paper.

of paper I have occasioned. Three years yet remain before I can become anyways settled in life, and during that interval my object must be to pass each hour in employment. The million would say I must study divinity; the bishops would give me folios to peruse, little dreaming that to me every blade of grass and every atom of matter is worth all the Fathers. I can bear a retrospect; but when I look forward to taking orders, a thousand dreadful ideas crowd at once upon my mind. Oh, Horace, my views in life are surely very humble; I ask but honest independence, and that will never be my lot. . . . . .

"I have many epistolary themes in embryo. Your brother's next will probably be upon the advantages of long noses, and the recent service mine accomplished in time of need; philosophy and folly take me by turns. I spent three hours one night last week in cleaving an immense wedge of old oaken timber without axe, hatchet, or wedges; the chopper was one instrument, one piece of wood wedged another, and a third made the hammer. Shad * liked it as well as myself, so we finished the job and fatigued ourselves. I amused myself, after writing your letter, with taking profiles; to-day I shall dignify my own and Shad's with pasteboard, marbled border, and a bow of green ribbon, to hang up in my collection room. . . . . The more I see of this strange world, the more I am convinced that society requires desperate remedies. The friends I have (and you

* A servant of his aunt's, Miss Tyler.

know me to be cautious in choosing them), are many of them struggling with obstacles, which never could happen were man what nature intended him. A torrent of ideas bursts into my mind when I reflect upon this subject; in the hours of sanguine expectation these reveries are agreeable, but more frequently the visions of futurity are dark and gloomy, and the only ray that enlivens the scene beams on America. You see I must fly from thought: to-day I begin Cowper's Homer, and write an ode; to-morrow read and write something else."

CHAPTER II.

OPINIONS, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS. — SCHEMES OF FUTURE LIFE. — FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH MR. COLERIDGE. — PANTISOCRACY. — QUARREL WITH MISS TYLER. — LETTER TO THOMAS SOUTHEY.—A.D. 1794.

So passed the close of 1793. At the latter end of the following January my father was again in residence at Balliol; before, however, we come to the events of the year, it is necessary to make a few preliminary remarks.

The expenses of my father's education, both at school and college, had been defrayed by his uncle, the Rev. Herbert Hill, at that time chaplain to the British Factory at Lisbon, whom he so touchingly addresses in the Dedication to the "Colloquies:"—

> "O friend! O more than father! whom I found
> Forbearing always, always kind; to whom
> No gratitude can speak the debt I owe."

And the kindness with which this was done had been the more perfectly judicious, as, although it had been both wished and hoped that my father would take holy orders, his uncle had never even hinted to him that he was educating him with that view. Other friends, however, had not shown the same judgment, and he had up to this time considered himself as "destined for the church" — a

prospect to which he had never reconciled himself, and which now began to weigh heavily upon him.

It is not to be concealed or denied, that the state of my father's mind with respect to religion, and more especially with respect to the doctrines of the Church of England, was very different in very early life from the opinions and feelings which he held in the maturity of his later years. Neither is this much to be wondered at, when we remember the sort of "bringing up" he had received, the state of society at that time, and the peculiar constitution of his own mind. His aunt, Miss Tyler, although possessing many good qualities, could hardly be said to have been a religiously-minded person. He had been removed from one school to another, undergoing "many of those sad changes through which a gentle spirit has to pass in this uneasy and disordered world;" * and he has said himself, doubtless from his own experience, that such schools are "unfavourable to devotional feelings, and destructive to devotional habits; that nothing, which is not intentionally profane, can be more irreligious than the forms of worship which are observed there; and that at no time has a schoolboy's life afforded any encouragement, any inducement, or any opportunity for devotion." † It must also be borne in mind that the aspect of the Church in this country at that time, as it presented itself to those who did not look below the surface, was very different from that which it now presents. A cloud, as it were, hung over it; if it had not our

* Life of Cowper, vol. i. p. 6 † Ibid. p. 12.

unhappy divisions, it had not also the spur to exertion, and the sort of spiritual freshness, which the storms of those dissensions have infused into it—good coming out of evil, as it so often does in the course of God's providence.

It is not so strange, therefore, that he should have entertained an invincible repugnance to taking Holy orders. Enthusiastic and visionary in the extreme, imbued strongly with those political views* which rarely fail to produce lax and dangerous views in religion, as his uncle quietly observes in one of his letters to him — "I knew what your politics were, and therefore had reason to suspect what your religion might be;" viewing the Church only as she appeared in the lives and preaching of many of her unworthy, many of her cold and indolent ministers; never directed to those studies which would probably have solved his doubts, and settled his opinions; and unfortified by an acquaintance with "that portion of the Church's history, the knowledge of which," as he himself says, "if early inculcated, might arm the young heart against the pestilent errors of these distempered times;"†—it is little to be wondered at if he fell into some of these errors.

His opinions at this time were somewhat unsettled, although they soon took the form of Unitarianism,

* In the following passage, written with reference to the times of Charles I., my father has evidently in view the causes of his own early republican bias:—"And, at the same time, many of the higher classes had imbibed from their classical studies prejudices in favour of a popular government, which were as congenial to the generous temper of inexperienced youth, as they are inconsistent with sound knowledge and mature judgment."—*Book of the Church*, vol. ii. p. 356.

† Book of the Church; Preface, p. 1.

from which point they seem gradually to have ascended without any abrupt transition, as the troubles of life increased his devotional feelings, and the study of religious authors informed his better judgment, until they finally settled down into a strong attachment to the doctrines of the Church of England. For the present he felt he could not assent to those doctrines, and therefore, although no man could possibly have been more willing to labour perseveringly and industriously for a livelihood, he began to feel much anxiety and distress of mind as to his future prospects, and to make several fruitless attempts to find some suitable profession.

These several projects are best narrated by himself: —

"Once more am I settled at Balliol, once more among my friends, alternately studying and philosophising, railing at collegiate folly, and enjoying rational society; my prospects in life are totally altered. I am resolved to come out Æsculapius secundus. . . . . Our society at Balliol continues the same in number. The freshmen of the term are not estimable (as Duppa says), and we are enough with the three Corpus men, who generally join us. The fiddle with one string is gone, and its place supplied with a harpsichord in Burnett's room. Lightfoot still melodises on the flute, and, had I but a Jew's harp, the concert would be complete . . . . On Friday next my anatomical studies begin; they must be pursued with attention. Apollo has hitherto only received my devotion as the deity of poets; I must now address him as a physician." I could allege many

reasons for my preference of physic; some disagreeable circumstances must attend the study, but they are more than counterbalanced by the expansion it gives the mind, and the opportunities it affords of doing good. Chemistry I must also attend: of this study I have always been fond, and it is now necessary to pursue it with care."*

And again, a few days after, he writes to Mr. Grosvenor Bedford: "I purpose studying physic: innumerable and insuperable objections appeared to divinity: surely the profession I have chosen affords at least as many opportunities of benefiting mankind. . . . . In this country a liberal education precludes the man of no fortune from independence in the humbler lines of life; he may either turn soldier or embrace one of three professions, in all of which there is too much quackery. . . . . Very soon shall I commence my anatomical and chemical studies. When well grounded in these, I hope to study under Cruikshank to perfect myself in anatomy, attend the clinical lectures, and then commence — Doctor Southey!!!"

He accordingly attended, for some little time, the anatomy school, and the lectures of the medical professors, but he soon abandoned the idea as hastily as he had adopted it; partly from being unable to overcome his disgust to a dissecting-room, and partly because the love of literary pursuits was so strong within him, that, without his being altogether aware of it at the time, it prevented his applying his mind

* To Horace Bedford, Esq., Jan. 24. 1794.

sufficiently to the requisite studies. His inclinations pointed ever to literature as the needle to the north; and however he might resolve, and however temporary circumstances led him for some years to attempt other objects and to frame other plans, an *invisible arm* seemed to draw him away from them, and place him in that path which he was finally destined to pursue, for which he had been fitted by Providence, and in which he was to find happiness, distinction, and permanent usefulness, both to his country and to his kind.

Among other schemes, which, at this time, crossed his mind, was the possibility of selling the reversion of some property, which he conceived he should inherit from his uncle, John Southey, of Taunton; and he now requests his friend, Mr. Grosvenor Bedford, to make some inquiries at Doctors Commons on the subject. "The information you may there receive," he writes, "will perhaps have some weight in my scale of destiny; it rests partly on the will of John Cannon Southey, who died in 1760. Hope and fear have almost lost their influence over me. If my reversion can be sold for any comfortable independence, I am sure you would rather advise me to seize happiness with mediocrity than lose it in waiting for affluence. My wishes aspire not above mediocrity. . . . . Every day do I repine at the education that taught me to handle a lexicon instead of a hammer, and destined me for one of the drones of society. Add to this, that had I a sufficiency in independence, I have every reason to expect happiness." The most pleasing visions of

domestic life would be realised. . . . . When I think on this topic, it is rather to cool myself with philosophy than to indulge in speculation. Twenty is young for a Stoic, you will say; but they have been years of experience and observation. . . . They have shown me that happiness is attainable; but, withal, taught me by repeated disappointments never to build on so sandy a foundation. It will be all the same a hundred years hence, is a vulgar adage which has often consoled me. Now do I execrate a declamation which I must make. O for emancipation from these useless forms, this useless life, these haunts of intolerance, vice, and folly!"*

Respecting the reversion here mentioned no satisfactory information could be obtained, and he next turned his thoughts towards obtaining some official employment in London. "You know my objection to orders," he writes to Mr. Grosvenor Bedford, "and the obstacles to any other profession: it is now my wish to be in the same office with you. . . . . Do, my dear Grosvenor, give me some information upon this topic. I speak to you without apologising; you will serve me if you can, and tell me if you cannot: it would be a great object to be in the same office with you. In this plan of life the only difficulty is obtaining such a place, and for this my hopes rest on Wynn and you; in case of success I shall joyfully bid adieu to Oxford, settle myself in some economical way of life, and, when I know my situation, unite myself to a woman whom I have

* May 11, 1794.

long esteemed as a sister, and for whom I now indulge a warmer sentiment. . . . . Write to me soon. I am sanguine in my expectations if you can procure my admission. Promotion is a secondary concern, though of that I have hopes. My pen will be my chief dependence. In this situation, where a small income relieves from want, interest will urge me to write, but independence secures me from writing so as to injure my reputation. Even the prospect of settling honestly in life has relieved my mind from a load of anxiety.

"In this plan of life every thing appears within the bounds of probability; the hours devoted to official attendance, even if entirely taken up by business, would pass with the idea that I was doing my duty, and honestly earning my subsistence. If they should not be fully occupied, I can pursue my own studies; and should I be fortunate enough to be in the same office with you, it would be equally agreeable to both. What situation can be pleasanter than that which places me with all my dearest friends?"*

In reply to this, Mr. Bedford urges upon him all the objections to which such a situation would be liable, and begs him to reconsider his determination with respect to taking Holy orders, probably thinking that a little time might calm his feelings and settle his opinions. His arguments, however, were of no avail; my father repeats his determination not to enter the Church, and continues: "Is it better that I should suffer inconvenience myself, or let my friends suffer

* May 28. 1794.

it for me? Is six hours' misery to be preferred to wretchedness of the whole twenty-four? . . . . I have only one alternative; some such situation, or emigration. It is not the sally of a momentary fancy that says this; either in six months I fix myself in some honest way of living, or I quit my country, my friends, and every fondest hope I indulge, for ever."

But before many steps had been taken in the matter, an obstacle appeared which had not previously occurred to my father's mind, and which at once put a stop to all further anticipations of the kind. It was evident that, before an official appointment of any kind, however trifling, could be procured, inquiry would be made at Oxford respecting his character and conduct; and, his political opinions once known, all chances of success would be destroyed. His republican views were so strong, and so freely expressed, that there was no possibility of any inquiry being made that would not place an insurmountable obstacle to his obtaining any employment under a Tory ministry. This being once suggested by a friend, was so apparent, that the scheme was as quickly abandoned as it had been hastily and eagerly conceived.*

"I think ——'s objection is a very strong one," he writes: "my opinions are very well known. I would have them so; Nature never meant me for a negative character; I can neither be good or bad, happy or miserable, by halves. You know me to be

* June 1. 1794.

neither captious nor quarrelsome, yet I doubt whether the quiet harmless situation I hoped for, were proper for me: it certainly, by imposing a prudential silence, would have sullied my integrity. I think I see you smile, and your imagination turns to a strait waistcoat and Moorfields. Aussi bien.

> Some think him wondrous wise,
> And some believe him mad."*

In the midst of his disappointment at the failure of these plans, upon which he seems to have set his hopes somewhat strongly, his first acquaintance commenced with Mr. Coleridge, and from this sprang a train of circumstances fraught with much importance to the after lives of both.

Mr. Coleridge was, at this time, an undergraduate of Jesus College, Cambridge, where he had entered in February, 1791, and he had already given proofs both of his great talents and his eccentricities. In the summer of that year he had gained Sir William Brown's gold medal for the Greek ode. It was on the slave trade, and its poetic force and originality were, as he said himself, much beyond the language in which they were conveyed. In the winter of 1792–3, he had stood for the University (Craven) Scholarship, with Dr. Keats, the late head master of Eton; Mr. Bethell of Yorkshire; and Bishop Butler, who was the successful candidate. In 1793, he had written without success for the Greek ode on astronomy; a translation of which is among my father's minor poems. In the latter part of this year, "in a moment of despondency and vexation of spirit, occa-

* To Grosvenor Bedford, Esq., June 25. 1794.

sioned principally by some debts not amounting to 100*l.*, he suddenly left his college and went to London," and there enlisted as a private in the 15th Light Dragoons, under an assumed name bearing his own initials. In this situation, than which he could not by possibility have chosen one more incongruous to all his habits and feelings, he remained until the following April, when the termination of his military career was brought about by a chance recognition in the street. His family were apprised of his situation; and, after some difficulty, he was duly discharged, on the 10th of April, 1794, at Hounslow.*

In the following June Mr. Coleridge went to Oxford, on a visit to an old school-fellow; and, being accidentally introduced to my father, an intimacy quickly sprung up between them, hastened by the similarity of the views they then held, both on the subjects of religion and politics. Each seems to have been mutually taken with the other. Coleridge was seized with the most lively admiration of my father's person and conversation; my father's impression of him is well told by himself. "Allen is with us daily, and his friend from Cambridge, Coleridge, whose poems you will oblige me by subscribing to, either at Hookham's or Edwards's. He is of most uncommon merit, — of the strongest genius, the clearest judgment, the best heart. My friend he already is, and must hereafter be yours. It is, I fear, impossible to keep him till you come, but my efforts shall not be wanting."†

* Coleridge's Biographia Literaria. Biographical Supplement, vol. ii. pp. 336, 337.

† To Grosvenor Bedford, Esq., June 12. 1794.

We have seen that in one or two of his early letters my father speaks of emigration and America as having entered his mind; and the failure of the plans I have just mentioned, now caused him to turn his thoughts more decidedly in that direction, and the result was a scheme of emigration, to which those who conceived it, gave the euphonious name of "Pantisocracy." This idea, it appears, was first originated by Mr. Coleridge and one or two of his friends, and he mentioned it to my father, on becoming acquainted with him at Oxford. Their plan was to collect as many brother adventurers as they could, and to establish a community in the New World upon the most thoroughly social basis. Land was to be purchased with their common contributions, and to be cultivated by their common labour. Each was to have his portion of work assigned him; and they calculated that a large part of their time would still remain for social converse and literary pursuits. The females of the party — for all were to be married men — were to cook and perform all domestic offices; and having even gone so far as to plan the architecture of their cottages, and the form of their settlement, they had pictured as pleasant a Utopia as ever entered an ardent mind.

The persons who at first entered into the scheme were my father; Robert Lovell, the son of a wealthy Quaker, who had married one of the Misses Fricker; George Burnett, a fellow-collegian, from Somersetshire; Robert Allen, then at Corpus Christi College; and Edmund Seward, of a Herefordshire family, also

a fellow-collegian, for whom my father entertained the sincerest affection and esteem.

Seward, however, did not long continue to approve of the plan; his opinions were more moderate than those of his friends, although he was inclined to hold democratic views, and he was strongly attached to the doctrines of the Church of England, in which he intended to take orders. His letters on the subject of Pantisocracy are indicative of a very thoughtful and pious mind; and he expresses much regret that he should at first have given any encouragement to a scheme, which he soon saw must fail if attempted to be carried out.

He perceived that the two chief movers, my father and Mr. Coleridge, were passing through a period of feverish enthusiasm which could not last; and he especially expresses his fear, that the views on religious subjects held by the party generally, were not sufficiently fixed and practical; and that discussions and differences of opinion on these points would probably arise, which, more than on any other, would tend to destroy that perfect peace and unanimity they so fondly hoped to establish.

These apprehensions, however, were not participated in by the rest of the party. Mr. Coleridge quitted Oxford for a pedestrian tour in Wales; and from Gloucester he writes his *first* letter to my father: — "You are averse," he says, "to gratitudinarian flourishes, else would I talk about hospitality, attention, &c. &c.; however, as I must not thank you, I will thank my stars. Verily, Southey, I like not Oxford, nor the inhabitants of it. I would

say thou art a nightingale among owls; but thou art so songless and heavy towards night that I will rather liken thee to the matin lark, thy *nest* is in a blighted cornfield, where the sleepy poppy nods its red-cowled head, and the weak-eyed mole plies his dark work; but thy soaring is even unto heaven. Or let me add (for my appetite for similies is truly canine at this moment), that as the Italian nobles their new-fashioned doors, so thou dost make the adamantine gate of Democracy turn on its golden hinges to most sweet music." *

The long vacation having commenced, my father went down to his aunt at Bath, and from thence writes as follows: —

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Bath, July 20. 1794.

"Grosvenor, I believe nearly three weeks have elapsed since your last letter at Oxford damped my breakfast with disappointment: to see you at all times would be a source of much pleasure; but I should have been particularly glad to have introduced you to Allen and Coleridge; they shared in my disappointment, but that part of human unhappiness is not alleviated by partition. Coleridge is now walking over Wales. You have seen a specimen of Allen's poetry, but never of his friend's; take these, they are the only ones I can show, and were written on the wainscot of the inn at Ross, which was once the dwelling-house of Kyrle."

* July 6. 1794.

[Here follow the well-known lines to "The Man of Ross."]

"Admire the verses, Grosvenor, and pity that mind that wrote them from its genuine feelings. 'Tis my intention soon to join him in Wales, and then to proceed to Edmund Seward, seriously to arrange with him the best mode of settling in America. Yesterday I took my proposals for publishing Joan of Arc to the printer; should the publication be any ways successful, it will carry me over, and get me some few acres, a spade, and a plough. My brother Thomas will gladly go with us, and, perhaps, two or three more of my most intimate friends; in this country I must either sacrifice happiness or integrity: but when we meet I will explain my notions more fully.

"I shall not reside next Michaelmas at Oxford, because the time will be better employed in correcting Joan, and overlooking the press. If I get fifty copies subscribed for by that time. . . . . Grosvenor, I shall inscribe Joan of Arc to you, unless you are afraid to have your name prefixed to a work that breathes some sentiments not perfectly in unison with court principles. Corrections will take up some time, for the poem shall go into the world handsomely — it will be my legacy to this country, and may, perhaps, preserve my memory in it. Many of my friends will blame me for so bold a step, but as many encourage me; and I want to raise money enough to settle myself across the Atlantic. If I have leisure to write there, my stock of imagery will be much increased. . . . . My proposals will be printed this evening. I remain here till to-morrow morning for

the sake of carrying some to Bristol. Methinks my name will look well in print. I expect a host of petty critics will buzz about my ears, but I must brush them off. You know what the poem was at Brixton; when well corrected I fear not its success.

"I have a linen coat making, much like yours; 'tis destined for much service. Burnett ambulated to Bristol with me from Oxford; he is a worthy fellow, whom I greatly esteem. We have a wild Welshman, red hot from the mountains, at Balliol, who would please and amuse you much. He is perfectly ignorant of the world; but with all the honest warm feelings of nature, a good head, and a good heart. Lightfoot is A. B.; old Balliol Coll. has lost its best inhabitants in him and Seward; Allen, too, resides only six weeks longer in the University; so it would be a melancholy place for me, were I to visit it again for residence. My tutor will much wonder at seeing my name*; but, as Thomas Howe is half a democrat, he will be pleased. What miracle could illuminate him I know not; but he surprised me much by declaiming against the war, praising America, and asserting the right of every country to model its own form of government. This was followed by—'Mr. Southey, you won't learn any thing by my lectures, Sir; so, if you have any studies of your own, you had better pursue them.' You may suppose I thankfully accepted the offer. Let me hear from you soon. You promised me some verses.

Sincerely yours,

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

* As the author of Joan of Arc.

"P. S. How are the wasps this year? My dog eats flies voraciously, and hunts wasps for the same purpose. If he catches them, I fear he will follow poor Hyder.* I saved him twice to day from swallowing them like oysters."

The Pantisocratic scheme seemed now to flourish; all were full of eager anticipation. "Everything smiles upon me," says my father; "my mother is fully convinced of the propriety of our resolution; she admires the plan; she goes with us: never did so delightful a prospect of happiness open upon my view before; to go with all I love; to go with all my friends, except your family and Wynn; to live with them in the most agreeable and most honourable employment; to eat the fruits I have raised, and see every face happy around me; my mother sheltered in her declining years from the anxieties which have pursued her; my brothers educated to be useful and virtuous." †

In the course of this month (August), Mr. Coleridge, having returned from his excursion in Wales, came to Bristol; and my father, who was then at Bath, having gone over to meet him, introduced him to Robert Lovell, through whom, it appears, they both at this time became known to Mr. Cottle; and here, also, Mr. Coleridge first became acquainted with his future wife, Sarah Fricker, the eldest of the three sisters, one of whom was married to Robert Lovell, the other having been engaged for some time

* A dog belonging to Mr. Bedford's father, which died from the sting of a wasp in the throat.

† To Grosvenor Bedford, Esq., August 1. 1794.

to my father. They were the daughters of Stephen Fricker, who had carried on a large manufactory of sugar pans or moulds at Westbury, near Bristol, and who, having fallen into difficulties, in consequence of the stoppage of trade by the American war, had lately died, leaving his widow and six children wholly unprovided for.

During this visit to Bath, the tragedy entitled "The Fall of Robespierre"* was written, the history of which is best explained by the following extract of a letter from my father to the late Henry Nelson Coleridge, Esq.:—"It originated in sportive conversation at poor Lovell's, and we agreed each to produce an act by the next evening — S. T. C. the first, I the second, and Lovell the third. S. T. C. brought part of his; I and Lovell, the whole of ours. But L.'s was not in keeping, and therefore I undertook to supply the third also by the following day. By that time S. T. C. had filled up his. A dedication to Mrs. Hannah More was concocted, and the notable performance was offered for sale to a bookseller in Bristol, who was too wise to buy it. Your uncle took the MSS. with him to Cambridge, and there rewrote the first act at leisure, and published it. My portion I never saw from the time it was written till the whole was before the world. It was written with newspapers before me as fast as newspapers could be put into blank verse. I have no desire to claim it now; but neither am I ashamed of it; and, if you think proper to print the whole, so be it."

* Printed in "Remains of S. T. Coleridge."

From Bath Mr. Coleridge went up to London, apparently with the view of consulting some friend respecting the publication of the "Fall of Robespierre." From thence he thus writes to my father: — "The day after my arrival I finished the first act: I transcribed it. The next morning Franklin (of Pembroke Coll. Cam., a *ci-devant Grecian* of our school — so we call the first boys) called on me, and persuaded me to go with him and breakfast with Dyer, author of "The Complaints of the Poor," "A Subscription," &c. &c. I went; explained our system. He was enraptured; pronounced it impregnable. He is intimate with Dr. Priestley, and doubts not that the Doctor will join us. He showed me some poetry, and I showed him part of the first act, which I happened to have about me. He liked it hugely; it was "a nail that would drive." . . : . . Every night I meet a most intelligent young man, who has spent the last five years of his life in America, and is lately come from thence as an agent to sell land. He was of our school. I had been kind to him: he remembers it, and comes regularly every evening to "benefit by conversation," he says. He says 2000*l.* will do; that he doubts not we can contract for our passage under 400*l.*; that we shall buy the land a great deal cheaper when we arrive at America than we could do in England; "or why," he adds, "am I sent over here?" That twelve men may *easily* clear 300 acres in four or five months; and that, for 600 dollars, a thousand acres may be cleared, and houses built on them. He recommends the Susquehana, from its excessive beauty and its

security from hostile Indians. Every possible assistance will be given us; we may get credit for the land for ten years or more, as we settle upon. That literary characters make *money* there: &c. &c. He never saw a *bison* in his life, but has heard of them: they are quite backwards. The mosquitos are not so bad as our gnats; and, after you have been there a little while, they don't trouble you much." *

From London Mr. Coleridge returned to Cambridge, and writes from thence, immediately on his arrival, full of enthusiasm for the grand plan: — "Since I quitted this room what and how important events have been evolved! America! Southey! Miss Fricker! . . . Pantisocracy! Oh! I shall have such a scheme of it! My head, my heart, are all alive. I have drawn up my arguments in battle array: they shall have the *tactitian* excellence of the mathematician, with the enthusiasm of the poet. The head shall be the mass; the heart, the fiery spirit that fills, informs, and agitates the whole." And then in large letters, in all the zeal of Pantisocratic fraternity, he exclaims,—"SHAD GOES WITH US: HE IS MY BROTHER!!" and, descending thence to less emphatical calligraphy, "I am longing to be with you: make Edith my sister. Surely, Southey, we shall be frendotatoi meta frendous — most friendly where all are friends. She must, therefore, be more emphatically my sister. . . . C——, the most excellent, the most Pantisocratic of aristocrats, has been laughing

* September 6. 1794.

at me. Up I arose, terrible in reasoning. He fled from me, because 'he would not answer for his own sanity, sitting so near a madman of genius.' He told me that the strength of my imagination had intoxicated my reason, and that the acuteness of my reason had given a directing influence to my imagination. Four months ago the remark would not have been more elegant than just: now it is nothing." *

In the mean time, my father, though not quite so much carried away as Mr. Coleridge, was equally earnest in forwarding the plan as far as it could be forwarded without that which is the sinews of emigration, as well as of war, and without which, though the "root of all evil," not even Pantisocracy could flourish. "In March we depart for America," he writes to his brother Thomas, then a midshipman on board the Aquilon frigate, "Lovell, his wife, brother, and two of his sisters; all the Frickers; my mother, Miss Peggy, and brothers; Heath, apothecary, &c.; G. Burnett, S. T. Coleridge, Robert Allen, and Robert Southey. Of so many we are certain, and expect more. Whatever knowledge of navigation you can obtain will be useful, as we shall be on the bank of a navigable river, and appoint you admiral of a cock-boat. . . .

"My aunt knows nothing as yet of my intended plan; it will surprise her, but not very agreeably. Every thing is in a very fair train, and all parties eager to embark. What do your common blue trowsers cost? Let me know, as I shall get two or three pairs for my working winter dress, and as many jackets,

* September 18. 1794.

either blue or grey: so my wardrobe will consist of two good coats, two cloth jackets, four linen ones, six brown holland pantaloons, and two nankeen ditto for dress. . . . .

"My mother says I am mad; if so, she is bit by me, for she wishes to go as much as I do. Coleridge was with us nearly five weeks, and made good use of his time. We preached Pantisocracy and Aspheterism everywhere. These, Tom, are two new words, the first signifying the equal government of all, and the other the generalisation of individual property; words well understood in the city of Bristol. We are busy in getting our plan and principles ready to distribute privately. . . . . The thoughts of the day, and the visions of the night, all centre in America. Time lags heavily along till March, but we have done wonders since you left me. . . . . I hope to see you in January; it will then be time for you to take leave of the navy, and become acquainted with all our brethren, the pantisocrats. You will have no objection to partake of a wedding dinner in February."* . . . .

By the middle of the following month the plan was still progressing favourably, but the main difficulty was beginning to occur to them. My father writes again to his brother: — "Our plan is in great forwardness; nor do I see how it can be frustrated. We are now twenty-seven adventurers. Mr. Scott talks of joining us; and if so, five persons will accompany him. . . . . I wish I could speak as satisfactorily upon money matters. Money is a huge evil

* September 20. 1794.

which we shall not long have to contend with. All well.

"Thank you for the hanger; keep it for me. You shall not remain longer in the navy than January: live so long in hope; think of America! and remember that while you are only thinking of our plan, we are many of us active in forwarding it.

"Would you were with us! we talk often of you with regret. This Pantisocratic scheme has given me new life, new hope, new energy, all the faculties of my mind are dilated; I am weeding out the few lurking prejudices of habit, and looking forward to happiness. I wish I could transfuse some of my high hope and enthusiasm into you, it would warm you in the cold winter nights."* . . . .

Hitherto all had gone on pretty smoothly, the plan of emigration, as well as my father's engagement to marry, had been carefully concealed from his aunt, Miss Tyler, who, he was perfectly aware, would most violently oppose both; and now, when at last she became acquainted with his intentions, her anger knew no bounds. The consequences cannot be more graphically described than by himself.

To Thomas Southey.

"Bath, October 19. 1794.

"My dear Brother Admiral,

"Here's a row! here's a kick up! here's a pretty commence! we have had a revolution in the College

* Bath, October 14. 1794.

Green, and I have been turned out of doors in a wet night. Lo and behold, even like mine own brother, I was penniless: it was late in the evening; the wind blew and the rain fell, and I had walked from Bath in the morning. Luckily my father's old great coat was at Lovell's. I clapt it on, swallowed a glass of brandy, and set off; I met an old drunken man three miles off, and was obliged to drag him all the way to Bath, nine miles! Oh, Patience, Patience, thou hast often helped poor Robert Southey, but never didst thou stand him in more need than on Friday the 17th of October, 1794.

"Well, Tom, here I am. My aunt has declared she will never see my face again, or open a letter of my writing.— So be it; I do my duty, and will continue to do it, be the consequences what they may. You are unpleasantly situated, so is my mother, so were we all till this grand scheme of Pantisocracy flashed upon our minds, and now all is perfectly delightful.

"Open war — declared hostilities! the children are to come here on Wednesday, and I meet them at the Long Coach on that evening. My aunt abuses poor Lovell most unmercifully, and attributes the whole scheme to him; you know it was concerted between Burnett and me. But of all the whole catalogue of enormities, nothing enrages my aunt so much as my intended marriage with Mrs. Lovell's sister Edith; this will hardly take place till we arrive in America; it rouses all the whole army of prejudices in my aunt's breast. Pride leads the fiery host, and a pretty kick up they must make there.

"I expect some money in a few days, and then you shall not want; yet, as this is not *quite* certain, I cannot authorise you to draw on me. Lovell is in London, he will return on Tuesday or Wednesday, and I hope will bring with him some ten or twenty pounds; he will likewise examine the wills at Doctors' Commons, and see what is to be done in the reversion way. — Every thing is in the fairest train. Favell and Le Grice, two young Pantisocrats of nineteen, join us; they possess great genius and energy. I have seen neither of them, yet correspond with both. You may, perhaps, like this sonnet on the subject of our emigration, by Favell: —

No more my visionary soul shall dwell
On joys that were; no more endure to weigh
The shame and anguish of the evil day,
Wisely forgetful! O'er the ocean swell,
Sublime of Hope, I seek the cottag'd dell
Where Virtue calm with careless step may stray,
And, dancing to the moonlight roundelay,
The wizard passion wears a holy spell.
Eyes that have ach'd with anguish! ye shall weep
Tears of doubt-mingled joy, as those who start
From precipices of distemper'd sleep,
On which the fierce-ey'd fiends their revels keep,
And see the rising sun, and feel it dart
New rays of pleasure trembling to the heart.

"This is a very beautiful piece of poetry; and we may form a very fair opinion of Favell from it. Scott, a brother of your acquaintance, goes with us. So much for news relative to our private politics.

"This is the age of revolutions, and a huge one we have had on the College Green. Poor Shadrack is left there, in the burning fiery furnace of her displeasure, and a prime hot birth has he got of it; he saw me depart with astonishment. — 'Why, Sir, you

be'nt going to Bath at this time of night, and in this weather! Do let me see you sometimes, and hear from you, and send for me when you are going.'

"We are all well, and all eager to depart. March will soon arrive, and I hope you will be with us before that time.

"Why should the man who acts from conviction of rectitude grieve because the prejudiced are offended? For me, I am fully possessed by the great cause to which I have devoted myself; my conduct has been open, sincere, and just; and though the world were to scorn and neglect me, I should bear their contempt with calmness.

Fare thee well.

Yours in brotherly affection,

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

It might have been hoped that this storm would have blown over; and that when Pantisocracy had died a natural death, and the marriage had taken place, Miss Tyler's angry feelings might have softened down; but it was not so, and the aunt and nephew never met again!

One other incident belongs to the close of this year — the publication of a small volume of poems, the joint production of Mr. Lovell and my father. Many of them have never been republished. The motto prefixed to them was an appropriate one: —

"Minuentur atræ
Carmine curæ."

CHAPTER III.

PANTISOCRACY PROPOSED TO BE TRIED IN WALES.—LETTERS TO MR. G. C. BEDFORD.—DIFFICULTIES AND DISTRESSES.—HISTORICAL LECTURES.—DEATH OF EDMUND SEWARD.—MR. COTTLE PURCHASES THE COPYRIGHT OF JOAN OF ARC.—PANTISOCRACY ABANDONED.—MISUNDERSTANDING WITH MR. COLERIDGE.—LETTER TO MR. G. C. BEDFORD.—MEETING WITH HIS UNCLE MR. HILL.—CONSENTS TO ACCOMPANY HIM TO LISBON.—MARRIAGE.—LETTERS TO MR. BEDFORD AND MR. COTTLE.—1794—1795.

My father was now a homeless adventurer; conscious of great resources in himself, but not knowing how to bring them into use; full of hope and the most ardent aspirations, but surrounded with present wants and difficulties. America was still the haven of his hopes, and for a little while he indulged in the pleasing anticipation, "Would that March were over!" he writes at this time to Mr. Bedford. "Affection has one or two strong cords round my heart, and will try me painfully — you and Wynn! A little network must be broken here; that I mind not, but my mother does; my mind is full of futurity, and lovely is the prospect; I am now like a traveller crossing precipices to get home, but my foot shall not slip."*

* Oct. 19. 1794.

The difficulty of raising sufficient funds for their purpose was now, however, becoming daily more and more evident; and it appears to have been next proposed by my father that the experiment of Pantisocracy should be first tried in some retired part of Wales, until some lucky turn of fortune should enable them to carry out their scheme of transatlantic social colonisation. To this Mr. Coleridge at first strongly objects, and sees now more clearly the difficulties of the plan, which the roll of the Atlantic seemed to obscure from their sight. "For God's sake, my dear fellow," he writes in remonstrance to my father, "tell me what we are to gain by taking a Welsh farm? Remember the principles and proposed consequences of Pantisocracy, and reflect in what degree they are attainable by Coleridge, Southey, Lovell, Burnett, and Co., some five men *going partners* together! In the next place, supposing that we have found the preponderating utility of our aspheterising in Wales, let us by our speedy and united inquiries discover the sum of money necessary. Whether such a farm with so very large a house is to be procured without launching our frail and unpiloted bark on a rough sea of anxieties. How much money will be necessary for *furnishing* so large a house. How much necessary for the maintenance of so large a family — eighteen people — for a year at least."

But the plan of going into Wales did not prosper any more than that of genuine Pantisocracy: the close of the year and the beginning of the next found matters still in the same unsatisfactory state. Mr.

Coleridge had kept the Michaelmas Term at Cambridge — the last he kept; and having gone from thence to London, remained there until early in the following January, when he returned to Bristol with my father, who had chanced to go up to town at that time.

The following letters will illustrate this period. In the latter one we have a vivid picture of the distresses and difficulties of his present position.

[1] *To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.*

"Bath, Jan. 5. 1795.

"My dear Grosvenor,

"If I were not very well acquainted with your disposition, I should apprehend, by your long silence, that you are offended with me. In one letter I spoke too warmly, but you know my affections are warm. I was sorry at having done so, and wrote to say so. The jolting of a rough cart over rugged roads is very apt to excite tumults in the intestinal canal; even so are the rubs of fortune prone to create gizzard grumblings of temper.

"Now, if you are not angry (and, on my soul, I believe you and anger to be perfectly heterogeneous), you will write to me very shortly; if you are, why you must remain so for a fortnight: then, it is probable, I shall pass two days in London, on my way to Cambridge; and, as one of them will be purely to be with you, if I do not remove all cause of complaint you have against Robert Southey, you shall punish him with your everlasting displeasure.

"From Horace, too, I hear nothing. Were I on the Alleghany Mountains, or buried in the wilds of Caernarvonshire, I could not have less intercourse with you. Perhaps you are weaning me, like a child. And now, Bedford, I shall shortly see G. S.*, if he be in London or at Trinity. Two days in London: one with you, when I shall call on him; the other with some friends of Coleridge, and correspondents of mine, admirable poets and Pantisocrats. How will G. S. receive me? is he altered? will he be reserved, and remember only our difference? Or, is there still the same goodness of heart in him as when we first met? I feel some little agitation at the thought. G. S. was the first person I ever met with, who at all assimilated with my disposition. I was a physiognomist without knowing it. He was my *substance*. I loved him as a brother once: perhaps he is infected with *politesse;* is polite to all, and affectionate to none.

"Coleridge is a man who has every thing of —— but his vices: he is what —— would have been, had he given up that time to study, which he consumed you know how lamentably.

"I will give you a little piece which I wrote, and which he corrected. 'Twas occasioned by the funeral of a pauper, without one person attending it.†

"I like this little poem, and there are few of mine of which I can say that.

* A schoolfellow with whom he had once been very intimate.

† Here follows "The Pauper's Funeral," printed among my father's minor poems.

"Bedford, I can sing eight songs: — 1. The antique and exhilarating Bacchanalian, Back and Sides go Bare. 2. The Tragedy of the Mince Pie, or the Cruel Master Cook. 3. The Comical Jest of the Farthing Rushlight. 4. The Bloody Gardener's Cruelty. 5. The Godly Hymn of the Seven Good Joys of the Virgin Mary; being a Christmas Carol. 6. The Tragedy of the Beaver Hat; or, as newly amended, The Brunswick Bonnet; containing three apt Morals. 7. The Quaint Jest of the Three Crows. 8. Tho Life and Death of Johnny Bulan.

"Now I shall outdo Horace! . . . Farewell, and believe me always

Your sincere and affectionate
ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Bristol, Feb. 8. 1795.

"I have been reading the four first numbers of 'The Flagellant:' they are all I possess. My dearest Grosvenor, they have recalled past times forcibly to my mind, and I could almost weep at the retrospect. Why have I not written to you before? Because I could only have told you of uncertainty and suspense. There is nothing more to say now. The next six months will afford more variety of incidents. But, my dear Bedford, though you will not love me the less, you will shake your head, and lament the effects of what you call enthusiasm. Would to God that we agreed in sentiment! for then you could enter

into the feelings of my heart, and hold me still dearer in your own.

"There is the strangest mixture of cloud and of sunshine! an outcast in the world! an adventurer! living by his wits! yet happy in the full conviction of rectitude, in integrity, and in the affection of a mild and lovely woman: at once the object of hatred and admiration: wondered at by all; hated by the aristocrats; the very oracle of my own party. Bedford! Bedford! mine are the principles of peace, of non-resistance; you cannot burst our bonds of affection. Do not grieve that circumstances have made me thus; you ought to rejoice that your friend acts up to his principles, though you think them wrong.

"Coleridge is writing at the same table; our names are written in the book of destiny, on the same page.

"Grosvenor, I must put your brains in requisition. We are about to publish a magazine on a new plan. One of the prospectuses, when printed, shall be forwarded to you. 'Tis our intention to say in the titlepage, S. T. C. and R. S., Editors; and to admit nothing but what is good. A work of the kind must not be undertaken without a certainty of indemnification, and then it bids very fair to be lucrative, so the booksellers here tell us. To be called The Provincial Magazine, and published at Bristol if we settle here. We mean to make it the vehicle of all our poetry: will you not give us some essays, &c. &c.? We can undoubtedly make it the best thing of the kind ever published; so, Bedford, be very wise and very witty. Send us whole essays, hints, good things,

&c. &c., and they shall cut a most respectable figure. The poetry will be printed so as to make a separate volume at the end of the year.

"What think you of this? I should say that the work will certainly express our sentiments, so expressed as never to offend; but, if truth spoken in the words of meekness be offence, we may not avoid it.

"I am in treaty with The Telegraph, and hope to be their correspondent. Hireling writer to a newspaper! 'Sdeath! 'tis an ugly title: but, *n'importe*, I shall write truth, and only truth. Have you seen, in Friday's Telegraph, a letter to Canning, signed Harrington? 'Twas the specimen of my prose.

"You will be melancholy at all this, Bedford; I am so at times, but what can I do? I could not enter the Church; nor had I finances to study physic; for public offices I am too notorious. I have not the gift of making shoes, nor the happy art of mending them. Education has unfitted me for trade, and I must, perforce, enter the muster roll of authors."

"Monday morning.

"My days are disquieted, and the dreams of the night only retrace the past to bewilder me in vague visions of the future. America is still the place to which our ultimate views tend; but it will be years before we can go. As for Wales, it is not practicable. The point is, where can I best subsist? . . . London is certainly the place for all who, like me, are on the world. . . . . London must be the place: if I and Coleridge can only get a fixed salary of 100*l.* a-year

between us, our own industry shall supply the rest. I will write up to 'The Telegraph:' they offered me a reporter's place, but nightly employments are out of the question. My troublesome guest, called honesty, prevents my writing in The True Briton. God knows I want not to thrust myself forward as a partisan: peace and domestic life are the highest blessings I could implore. Enough! this state of suspense must soon be over: I am worn and wasted with anxiety; and, if not at rest in a short time, shall be disabled from exertion, and sink to a long repose. Poor Edith! Almighty God protect her!

"You can give me no advice, nor point out any line to pursue; but you can write to me, and tell me how you are, and of your friends. Let me hear from you as soon as possible: moralise, metaphysicise, pun, say good things, promise me some aid in the magazine, and shake hands with me as cordially by letter, as when we parted in the Strand. I look over your letters, and find but little alteration of sentiment from the beginning of '92 to the end of '94. What a strange mass of matter is in mine during those periods! I mean to write my own life, and a most useful book it will be. You shall write the Paraleipomena; but do not condole too much over my mistaken principles, for such pity will create a mutiny in my sepulchred bones, and I shall break prison to argue with you, even from the grave. God love you! I think soon to be in London, if I can get a situation there: sometimes the prospect smiles upon me. I want but fifty pounds a-year certain, and can trust myself for enough beyond that. . . . . .

Fare you well, my dear Grosvenor! Have you been to Court? quid Romæ facias? O thou republican aristocrat! thou man most worthy of republicanism! what hast thou to do with a laced coat, and a chapeau, and a bag wig, and a sword?

Ah spirit pure
That error's mist had left thy purged eye!
. . . . . .

"Peace be with you, and with all mankind, is the earnest hope of your

R. S."

My father having ceased to reside at Oxford, and having no longer his aunt's house as a home, was compelled now to find some means of supporting himself; and Mr. Coleridge being in the same predicament, they determined upon giving each a course of public lectures. Mr. Coleridge selected political and moral subjects; my father, history, according to the following prospectus: —

"Robert Southey, of Balliol College, Oxford, proposes to read a course of Historical Lectures, in the following order: —

1st. Introductory: on the Origin and Progress of Society.

2nd. Legislation of Solon and Lycurgus.

3rd. State of Greece from the Persian War to the Dissolution of the Achaian League.

4th. Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Roman Empire.

5th. Progress of Christianity.

6th. Manners and Irruptions of the Northern Nations. Growth of the European States. Feudal System.

7th. State of the Eastern Empire, to the Capture of Constantinople by the Turks; including the Rise and Progress of the Mohammedan Religion, and the Crusades.

8th. History of Europe, to the Abdication of the Empire by Charles the Fifth.

9th. History of Europe, to the Establishment of the Independence of Holland.

10th. State of Europe, and more particularly of England, from the Accession of Charles the First to the Revolution in 1688.

11th. Progress of the Northern States. History of Europe to the American War.

12th. The American War.

Tickets for the whole course, 10*s.* 6*d.*, to be had of Mr. Cottle, Bookseller, High Street."

Of these lectures I can find no trace among my father's papers. Mr. Cottle states that they were numerously attended, and "their composition greatly admired." My father thus alludes to them at the time in a letter to his brother Thomas:—"I am giving a course of Historical Lectures, at Bristol, teaching what is right by showing what is wrong; my company, of course, is sought by all who love good republicans and odd characters. Coleridge and I are daily engaged. . . . John Scott has got me a place of a guinea and a half per week, for writing in some new work called The Citizen, of what kind

I know not, save that it accords with my principles: of this I daily expect to hear more.

"If Coleridge and I can get 150*l.* a-year between us we purpose marrying, and retiring into the country, as our literary business can be carried on there, and practising agriculture till we can raise money for America — still the grand object in view.

"So I have cut my cable, and am drifting on the ocean of life — the wind is fair and the port of happiness I hope in view. It is possible that I may be called upon to publish my Historical Lectures; this I shall be unwilling to do, as they are only splendid declamation." *

The delivery of these lectures occupied several months; but the employment they furnished did not prevent occasional fits of despondency, although his naturally elastic mind soon shook them off. He seems to have purposed paying a visit to his friends at Brixton at this time, but it was not accomplished. To this he refers in the following curious letter: —

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"May 27. 1795.

"My dear Grosvenor,

"You and Wynn could not more enjoy the idea of seeing me than I anticipated being with you; as for coming now, or fixing any particular time, it may not be. My mind, Bedford, is very languid; I dare not say I will go at any fixed period; if you knew the fearful anxiety with which I sometimes hide

* March 21. 1795.

myself to avoid an invitation, you would perhaps pity, perhaps despise me. There is a very pleasant family here, literary and accomplished, that I have almost offended by never calling on. Coleridge is there three or four times in the course of the week; the effort to join in conversation is too painful to me, and the torpedo coldness of my *phizmahogany* has no right to chill the circle; by the by, my dear Grosvenor, if you know any artist about to paint a group of banditti, I shall be very fit to sit for a young cub of ferocity; I have put on the look at the glass so as sometimes to frighten myself. . . . .

"Well, but there is no difficulty in discovering the assiduities of affection; the eye is very eloquent, and women are well skilled in its language. I asked the question. Grosvenor, you will love your sister Edith. I look forward with feelings of delight that dim my eyes to the day when she will expect you, as her brother, to visit us — brown bread, wild Welsh raspberries, heigh ho! this school-boy anticipation follows us through life, and enjoyments uniformly disappoint expectation. . . . . .

. . . . . .

"Poetry softens the heart, Grosvenor. No man ever tagged rhyme without being the better for it. I write but little. The task of correcting Joan is a very great one; but as the plan is fundamentally bad, it is necessary the poetry should be good. The Convict, for which you asked, is not worth reading, I think of sometime rewriting it. If I could be with you another eight weeks, I believe I should write another epic poem, so essential is it to be happily situated.

"I shall copy out what I have done of Madoc and send you ere long; you will find more simplicity in it than in any of my pieces, and of course it is the best. I shall study three works to write it — the Bible, Homer, and Ossian. . . . .

"Some few weeks ago I was introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Perkins: they were on a visit, and I saw them frequently; he pleased me very much, for his mind was active and judicious, and benevolence was written in every feature of his face. I never saw a woman superior to her in mind, nor two people with a more rational affection for each other. On their quitting this place, they urged me to visit them at Bradford. A few days ago, I was with my mother at Bath, and resolved to walk over to tea, — it is but six miles distant, and the walk extremely beautiful. I got to Bradford, and inquiring for Mr. Perkins, was directed two miles in the country, to Freshford; my way lay by the side of the river; the hills around were well wooded, the evening calm and pleasant; it was quite May weather; and as I was alone, and beholding only what was beautiful, and looking on to a pleasant interview, I had relapsed into my old mood of feeling benevolently and keenly for all things. A man was sitting on the grass tying up his bundle, and of him I asked if I was right for Freshford, he told me he was going there. 'Does Mr. Perkins live there?' 'Yes; he buried his wife last Tuesday.' I was thunderstruck. 'Good God! I saw her but a few weeks ago.' 'Ay, Sir, ten days ago she was as well as you are; but she is in Freshford churchyard now!'

"Grosvenor, I cannot describe to you what I felt;

the man thought I had lost a relation; it was with great difficulty I could resolve on proceeding to see him; however, I thought it a kind of duty and went. — Guess my delight on finding another Mr. Perkins, to whom I had been directed by mistake!

"You do not know what I suffered under the impression of her death, at the relief I felt at discovering the mistake. Strange selfishness! — this man, too, had lost a wife, a young wife but lately married, whom perhaps he loved; and I — I rejoiced at his loss, because it was not my friend! — yet, without this selfishness, man would be an animal below the orang outang. It is mortifying to analise our noblest affections, and find them all bottomed on selfishness. I hear of thousands killed in battle — I read of the young, the virtuous, dying, and think of them no more — when if my very dog died I should weep for him; if I lost you, I should feel a lasting affliction; if Edith were to die, I should follow her.

"I am dragged into a party of pleasure to-morrow* for two days. An hour's hanging would be luxury to me compared with these detestable schemes. — Party of pleasure! Johnson never wrote a better tale than that of the Ethiopian king. Here is the fire at home, and a great chair, and yet I must be moving off for pleasure. Grosvenor, I will steal Cadman's† long pipe, chew opium, and learn to be happy with the least possible trouble.

* An account of this party of pleasure is given in Cottle's Reminiscences of Coleridge. Apparently the reality was not more agreeable than the anticipation.

† The name of a mutual acquaintance.

"Coleridge's remembrances to you. He is applying the medicine of argument to my misanthropical system of indifference. — It will not do, a strange dreariness of mind has seized me. I am indifferent to society, yet I feel my private attachments growing more and more powerful, and weep like a child when I think of an absent friend.

God bless you."

A few weeks later he writes again in much affliction at the death of his friend Seward.

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Bristol, June 15. 1795

"Bedford — he is dead; my dear Edmund Seward! after six weeks' suffering.

"These, Grosvenor, are the losses that gradually wean us from life. May that man want consolation in his last hour, who would rob the survivor of the belief, that he shall again behold his friend! You know not, Grosvenor, how I loved poor Edmund: he taught me all that I have of good. When I went with him into Worcestershire, I was astonished at the general joy his return occasioned — the very dogs ran out to him. In that room where I have so often seen him, he now lies in his coffin!

"It is like a dream, the idea that he is dead — that his heart is cold — that he, whom but yesterday morning I thought and talked of as alive — as the friend I knew and loved — is dead! When these things come home to the heart, they palsy it. I am

sick at heart; and, if I feel thus acutely, what must his sisters feel? what his poor old mother, whose life was wrapped up in Edmund? I have seen her look at him till the tears ran down her cheek.

"There is a strange vacancy in my heart. The sun shines as usual, but there is a blank in existence to me. I have lost a friend, and such a one! God bless you, my dear, dear Grosvenor! Write to me immediately. I will try, by assiduous employment, to get rid of very melancholy thoughts. I am continually dwelling on the days when we were together: there was a time when the sun never rose that I did not see Seward. It is very wrong to feel thus; it is unmanly.

God bless you!

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

"P. S. I wrote to Edmund on receiving your last: my letter arrived the hour of his death, four o'clock on Wednesday last. Perhaps he remembered me at that hour.

"Grosvenor, I am a child; and all are children who fix their happiness on such a reptile as man; — this great, this self-ennobled being called man, the next change of weather may blast him.

"There is another world where all these things will be amended.

"God help the man who survives all his friends."

The passionate grief to which this letter gave utterance did not pass lightly away. In the "Hymn to the Penates," first printed in 1796, he alludes touchingly to his dear friend departed; and the fol-

lowing very beautiful poem — which will be read with increased interest in connection with the subject which gave rise to it — was written four years later.

THE DEAD FRIEND.

1.

Not to the grave, not to the grave, my Soul,
Descend to contemplate
The form that once was dear!
The Spirit is not there
Which kindled that dead eye,
Which throbb'd in that cold heart,
Which in that motionless hand
Hath met thy friendly grasp.
The Spirit is not there!
It is but lifeless, perishable flesh
That moulders in the grave;
Earth, air, and water's ministering particles
Now to the elements
Resolved, their uses done.
Not to the grave, not to the grave, my Soul,
Follow thy friend beloved,
The spirit is not there!

2.

Often together have we talk'd of death;
How sweet it were to see
All doubtful things made clear;
How sweet it were with powers
Such as the Cherubim,
To view the depth of Heaven!
O Edmund! thou hast first
Begun the travel of Eternity!
I look upon the stars,
And think that thou art there,
Unfetter'd as the thought that follows thee.

3.

And we have often said how sweet it were,
With unseen ministry of angel power,
To watch the friends we loved.
Edmund! we did not err!
Sure I have felt thy presence! Thou hast given
A birth to holy thought,
Hast kept me from the world unstain'd and pure.

Edmund! we did not err!
Our best affections here
They are not like the toys of infancy;
The Soul outgrows them not;
We do not cast them off;
Oh if it could be so,
It were indeed a dreadful thing to die!

4.

Not to the grave, not to the grave, my Soul,
Follow thy friend beloved!
But in the lonely hour,
But in the evening walk,
Think that he companies thy solitude;
Think that he holds with thee
Mysterious intercourse;
And though remembrance wake a tear,
There will be joy in grief.

Westbury, 1799.

In the midst of these griefs and perplexities, one bright spot showed itself, in the laying of what I may call, the foundation stone of my father's literary reputation.

His poem of Joan of Arc, as we have seen, had been written in the summer of 1793, and he had for some time ardently desired to publish it; but, for want of means, was unable to do so. Towards the close of the following year it had been announced for publication by subscription; but subscribers came slowly forward, and it seemed very doubtful whether a sufficient number could be obtained. Shortly afterwards, his acquaintance with Mr. Cottle commenced. For the result I will quote his own words, as commemorating, in a very interesting manner, when he had almost arrived at the close of his literary career, that which may be called its commencement, and which was so important an epoch in his troubled early life.

"One evening I read to him part of the poem, without any thought of making a proposal concerning it, or expectation of receiving one. He, however, offered me fifty guineas for the copyright, and fifty copies for my subscribers, which was more than the list amounted to; and the offer was accepted as promptly as it was made. It can rarely happen, that a young author should meet with a bookseller as inexperienced and as ardent as himself; and it would be still more extraordinary, if such mutual indiscretion did not bring with it cause for regret to both. But this transaction was the commencement of an intimacy which has continued without the slightest shade of displeasure at any time on either side, to the present day. At that time few books were printed in the country, and it was seldom, indeed, that a quarto volume issued from a provincial press. A font of new type was ordered, for what was intended to be the handsomest book that Bristol had ever yet sent forth; and, when the paper arrived, and the printer was ready to commence his operations, nothing had been done towards preparing the poem for the press, except that a few verbal alterations had been made.

"I was not, however, without misgivings; and, when the first proof sheet was brought me, the more glaring faults of the composition stared me in the face. But the sight of a well-printed page, which was to be set off with all the advantages that fine wove paper and hot pressing could impart, put me in spirits, and I went to work with good will. About half the

first book was left in its original state; the rest of the poem was recast, and recomposed while the printing went on. This occupied six months."*

In this work of correction my father was now occupied, having laid aside "Madoc," which had been commenced in the autumn of the previous year, for that purpose. Meantime, the scheme of Pantisocracy was entirely abandoned, and the arrival from Lisbon of Mr. Hill changed the current of his thoughts. "My uncle is in England," he writes to Mr. Bedford: "I am in daily expectation of seeing him again. . . . . Grosvenor, when next I see you it will not be for a visit: I shall fix my residence near you to study the law!!! My uncle urges me to enter the church; but the gate is perjury, and I am little disposed to pay so heavy a fine at the turnpike of orthodoxy. . . . . On seeing my uncle I shall communicate to him my intentions concerning the law. If he disapproves of them, I have to live where I can, and how I can, for fifteen months. I shall then be enabled to enter and marry. If he approves, why then, Grosvenor, my first business will be to write to you, and request you to procure me lodgings somewhere at Stockwell, or Newington, or any where as far from London, and as near your road, as possible. I cannot take a house till my finances will suffer me to furnish it; and for this I depend upon my Madoc, to which, after Christmas, I shall apply with assiduity, always remembering John Doe and Richard Roe. And now will you permit me, in

* Preface to Joan of Arc, Collected Edition of the Poems, 1837

a volume of poems which go to the press to-morrow, to insert your 'Witch of Endor,' either with your name or initials, and to be corrector plenipotent? This is an office Coleridge and I mutually assume, and we both of us have sense enough, and taste enough, to be glad of mutual correction. His poems and mine will appear together; two volumes elegant as to type and hot-pressed paper, and for his, *meo periculo*, they will be of more various excellence* than any one volume this country has ever yet seen. I will rest all my pretensions to poetical taste on the truth of this assertion."†

It does not appear that this idea of publishing conjointly with Mr. Coleridge was carried into effect, probably owing to a temporary estrangement, which now took place between himself and my father, in consequence of the latter being the first to abandon the Pantisocratic scheme. This had greatly disturbed and excited Mr. Coleridge, who was by no means sparing in his reproaches, and manifested, by the vehemence of his language, that he must have felt for the time no common disappointment.

My father's next letter to Mr. Bedford gives an interesting sketch of the progress of his own mind.

* In one of Mr. Coleridge's letters to my father (Sept. 18. 1794), after some verbal criticism on several of his sonnets combined with much praise, he thus prefaces the quotation of one of his own: — "I am almost ashamed to write the following, it is so inferior. Ashamed! no Southey; God knows my heart. I am *delighted* to feel you superior to me in genius as in virtue." Here was an honourable rivalry of praise!

† August 22. 1795.

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Bath, October 1. 1795.

"I have been living over three years and a half in your letters, Grosvenor, with what variety of reflections you may imagine, from the date of the 'Flagellant,' through many a various plan! You asked Collins, when you first saw him after his residence at Oxford, if I was altered, and his 'No' gave you pleasure. I have been asking myself the same question, and, alas! in truth, must return the same answer. No, I am not altered. I am as warm-hearted and as open as ever. Experience never wasted her lessons on a less fit pupil; yet, Bedford, my mind is considerably expanded, my opinions are better grounded, and frequent self-conviction of error has taught me a sufficient degree of scepticism on all subjects to prevent confidence. The frequent and careful study of Godwin was of essential service. I read, and all but worshipped. I have since seen his fundamental error, — that he theorises for another state, not for the rule of conduct in the present. . . . . I can confute his principles, but all the good he has done me remains: 'tis a book I should one day like to read with you for our mutual improvement; when we have been neighbours six months our opinions will accord — a bold prophecy, but it will be fulfilled.

"My poetical taste was much meliorated by Bowles, and the constant company of Coleridge. . . . . . For religion, I can confute the Atheist, and

baffle him with his own weapons; and can, at least, teach the Deist that the arguments in favour of Christianity are not to be despised; metaphysics I know enough to use them as defensive armour, and to deem them otherwise difficult trifles.

"You have made me neglect necessary business. I was busy with this huge work of mine, when your letters tempted me, and gave me an appetite for the pen; somehow they have made me low-spirited, and I find a repletion of the lachrymal glands. Apropos: do kill some dozen men for me anatomically, any where except in the head or heart. Hang all wars! I am as much puzzled to carry on mine at Orleans as our admirable minister is to devise a plan for the next campaign. . . . . *Pardonnez moi!* my republican royalist! my philanthropic aristocrat.

"I am obliged to Nares for a very handsome review. It is my intention to write a tragedy; the subject from the Observer,—the Portuguese accused before the Inquisition of incest and murder. Read the story.

"Madoc is to be the pillar of my reputation; how many a melancholy hour have I beguiled by writing poetry! . . . . . .

. . . . . .

"Friday, October 9.

"I found your letter on my arrival to-day. My uncle writes not to me, and I begin to think he is so displeased at my rejecting a good settlement, for the foolish prejudice I have against perjuring myself, that he gives me up. *Aussi bien!* so be it, any thing but

this terrible suspense. Zounds, Grosvenor, suspense shall be the subject of my tragedy. Indeed, indeed, I have often the heartache. Cannot you come to Bath for a week? I have so much to say to you, and I will never quit Edith: every day endears her to me. I am as melancholy here at Bath as you can imagine, and yet I am very little here; not two days in the week: the rest I pass with Cottle that I may be near her. Cottle offered me his house in a letter which you shall see when we meet, and for which he will ever hold a high place in your heart. I bear a good face, and keep all uneasiness to myself: indeed, the port is in view, and I must not mind a little sickness on the voyage.

. . . . . .

Bedford, I have beheld that very identical tiger. There's a grand hexameter for you!

"Bedford, I have beheld that very identical tiger who stopt the mail coach on the king's highway, not having the fear of *God* and the *king* before his eyes, —no, nor of the *guard* and his *blunderbuss*. What a pity, Grosvenor, that that blunderbuss should be levelled at you! how it would have *struck* a Democrat! Never mind, 'tis only a *flash*, and you, like a fellow whose *uttermost upper grinder* is being torn out by the roots by a mutton-fisted barber, will *grin* and endure it.

"Gaiety suits ill with me; the above extempore witticisms are as old as six o'clock Monday morning last, and noted down in my pocket-book for you.

"God bless you! Good night.

"Oct. 10.

"I visited Hannah More, at Cowslip Green, on Monday last, and seldom have I lived a pleasanter day. She knew my opinions, and treated them with a flattering deference; her manners are mild, her information considerable, and her taste correct. There are five sisters, and each of them would be remarked in a mixed company. Of Lord Orford they spoke very handsomely, and gave me a better opinion of Wilberforce than I was accustomed to entertain. They pay for and direct the education of 1000 poor children; and for aristocracy, Hannah More is much such an aristocrat as a certain friend of mine.

. . . .

God love you, my dear friend!

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

The long expected, and perhaps somewhat dreaded meeting with Mr. Hill soon took place; but there was no diminution of kindness on his part, notwithstanding the great disappointment he felt at his nephew's determination not to enter the church, in which it would have been in his power immediately and effectually to have assisted him. He now seems to have given up all hope of prevailing upon him to change his resolution; and it was soon arranged that my father should accompany him to Lisbon for a few months, and then return to England, in order to qualify himself for entering the legal profession. Mr. Hill's object in this was partly to take him out of the arena of political discussion into which he had thrown

himself by his lectures, and bring him round to more moderate views, and also to wean him if possible from what he considered an "imprudent attachment." In the former object he partly succeeded; in attempting to gain the latter, he had not understood my father's character. He was too deeply and sincerely attached to the object of his choice to be lightly turned from it; and the similarity of her worldly circumstances to his own would have made him consider it doubly dishonourable even to postpone the fulfilment of his engagement.

This matter, however, he does not appear to have entered into with his uncle. He consented to accompany him to Lisbon, and thus communicates his resolution to his constant correspondent: —

"To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Oct. 23. 1795.

"And where, Grosvenor, do you suppose the fates have condemned me for the next six months? — to Spain and Portugal! Indeed, my heart is very heavy. I would have refused, but I was weary of incessantly refusing all my mother's wishes, and it is only one mode of wearing out a period that must be unpleasant to me anywhere.

"I now know neither when I go, nor where, except that we cross to Coruña, and thence by land to Lisbon. Cottle is delighted with the idea of a volume of travels. My Edith persuades me to go, and then weeps that I am going, though she would

not permit me to stay. It is well that my mind is never unemployed. I have about 900 lines, and half a preface yet to compose, and this I am resolved to finish by Wednesday night next. It is more than probable that I shall go in a fortnight.

"Then the advantageous possibility of being captured by the French, or the still more agreeable chance of going to Algiers. . . . . Then to give my inside to the fishes on the road, and carry my outside to the bugs on my arrival; the luxury of sleeping with the mules, and if they should kick in the night. And to travel, Grosvenor, with a lonely heart! . . . . When I am returned I shall be glad that I have been. The knowledge of two languages is worth acquiring, and perhaps the climate may agree with me, and counteract a certain habit of skeletonisation, that though I do not apprehend it will hasten me to the worms, will, if it continues, certainly cheat them of their supper. . . . . We will write a good opera; my expedition will teach me the costume of Spain.

"By the bye I have made a discovery respecting the story of the 'Mysterious Mother.' Lord O. tells it of Tillotson: the story is printed in a work of Bishop Hall's, 1652; he heard it from Perkins (the clergyman whom Fuller calls an excellent chirurgeon at jointing a broken soul: he would pronounce the word 'damn' with such an emphasis as left a doleful echo in his auditors' ears a good while after. Warton-like I must go on with Perkins, and give you an epigram. He was lame of the right hand: the Latin is as blunt as a good-humoured joke need be: —

Dextera quantumvis fuerat tibi manca, docendi
Pollebas mirâ dexteritate tamen ;

Though Nature thee of thy *right* hand bereft,
Right well thou *writest* with thy hand that's *left* :

and all this in a parenthesis). Hall adds that he afterwards discovered the story in two German authors, and that it really happened in Germany. If you have not had your transcription of the tragedy bound, there is a curious piece of information to annex to it. . . . . I hope to become master of the two languages, and to procure some of the choicest authors; from their miscellanies and collections, that I cannot purchase, I shall transcribe the best or favourite pieces, and translate, for we have little literature of those parts, and these I shall request some person fond of poetry to point out, if I am fortunate enough to find one. *Mais hélas ! J'en doute,* as well as you, and fear me I shall be friendless for six months!

" Grosvenor, I am not happy. When I get to bed, reflection comes with solitude, and I think of all the objections to the journey; it is right, however, to look at the white side of the shield. The Algerines, if they should take me, it might make a very pretty subject for a chapter in my Memoirs ; but of this I am very sure, that my biographer would like it better than I should.

" Have you seen the ' Mœviad ? ' The poem is not equal to the former production of the same author, but the spirit of panegyric is more agreeable than that of satire, and I love the man for his lines to his

own friends; there is an imitation of Otium Divos, very eminently beautiful. Merry has been satirised too much, and praised too much. . . . .

"I am in hopes that the absurd fashion of wearing powder has received its death-blow; the scarcity we are threatened with (and of which we have as yet experienced only a very slight earnest) renders it now highly criminal. I am glad you are without it. . . . . .

God bless you!

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

When the day was fixed for the travellers to depart, my father fixed that also for his wedding-day; and on the 14th of November, 1795, was united at Radclift church, Bristol, to Edith Fricker. Immediately after the ceremony they parted. My mother wore her wedding-ring hung round her neck, and preserved her maiden name until the report of the marriage had spread abroad. The following letters will explain these circumstances, and fill up the interval until his return: —

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Nov. 21. 1795. Nan Swithin, near St. Columbs.

"Grosvenor, what should that necromancer deserve who could transpose our souls for half an hour, and make each the inhabitant of the other's tenement? There are so many curious avenues in mine, and so

many closets in yours, of which you have never sent me the key.

"Here I am, in a huge and handsome mansion, not a finer room in the county of Cornwall than the one in which I write; and yet have I been silent, and retired into the secret cell of my own heart. This day week, Bedford! There is a something in the bare name that is now mine, that wakens sentiments I know not how to describe: never did man stand at the altar with such strange feelings as I did. Can you, Grosvenor, by any effort of imagination, shadow out my emotion? . . . She returned the pressure of my hand, and we parted in silence.——Zounds! what have I to do with supper!

"Nov. 22.

"I love writing, because to write to a dear friend is like escaping from prison. Grosvenor, my mind is confined here; there is no point of similarity between my present companions and myself. But, 'If I have freedom in,' &c.: you know the quotation.*

"This is a foul country: the tinmen inhabit the most agreeable part of it, for they live underground. Above it is most dreary; desolate. My *sans culotte*†, like Johnson's in Scotland, becomes a valuable piece

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage.

"If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty."

Lovelace's Poems.

† His walking stick.

of timber, and I a most dull and sullenly silent fellow; such effects has place! I wonder what Mr. Hoblyn thinks of me. He mentioned that he had seen my poems in the B. Critic. My uncle answered, 'It is more than I have.' Never had man so many relations so little calculated to inspire confidence. My character is open, even to a fault. Guess, Grosvenor, what a Kamschatka climate it must be to freeze up the flow of my thoughts, which you have known more frisky than your spruce beer!

"My bones are very thinly cushioned with flesh, and the jolting over these rough roads has made them very troublesome. Bedford, they are at this moment uttering aristocracy, and I am silent. Two whole days was I imprisoned in stage coaches, cold as a dog's nose, hungry, and such a sinking at the heart as you can little conceive. Should I be drowned on the way, or by any other means take possession of that house where anxiety never intrudes, there will be a strange page or two in your life of me.

"My Joan of Arc must by this time be printed: the first of next month it comes out. To me it looks like something that has concerned me, but from which my mind is now completely disengaged. The sight of pen and ink reminds me of it. You will little like some parts of it. For me, I am now satisfied with the poem, and care little for its success.

"You supped upon Godwin and oysters, with Carlisle. Have you, then, read Godwin, and that with attention? Give me your thoughts upon his book; for faulty as it is in many parts, there is a mass of truth in it that must make every man think. God-

win, as a man, is very contemptible. I am afraid that most public characters will ill endure examination in their private lives; —to venture upon so large a theatre much vanity is necessary, and vanity is the bane of virtue—'tis a foul upas tree, and no healing herb but withers beneath its shade—what, then, had I to do with publishing? This, Grosvenor, is a question to which I can give myself no self-satisfying solution. For my Joan of Arc there is an obvious reason; here I stand acquitted of anything like vanity or presumption. Grosvenor, what motive created the F.? certainly it was not a bad one. . . . .

"The children in the next room are talking—a harpsichord not far distant annoys me grievously—but then there are a large company of rooks, and their croak is always in unison with what is going on in my thorax. I have a most foul pain suddenly seized me there. Grosvenor, if a man could but make pills of philosophy for the mind! but there is only one kind of pill that will cure mental disorders, and a man must be labouring under the worst before he can use that. . . . . I am waiting for the packet, and shall be here ten days. Direct to me at Miss Russell's, Falmouth: there I shall find your letters: and remember, that by writing you will give some pleasure to one who meets with very little.

Farewell!

Yours,

R. S."

To Joseph Cottle, Esq.

"Falmouth, 1795.

"My dear Friend,

"I have learnt from Lovel the news from Bristol, public as well as private, and both of an interesting nature. My marriage is become public. You know my only motive for wishing it otherwise, and must know that its publicity can give me no concern. I have done my duty. Perhaps you may hardly think my motives for marrying at that time sufficiently strong. One, and that to me of great weight, I believe was never mentioned to you. There might have arisen feelings of an unpleasant nature, at the idea of receiving support from one not legally a husband; and (do not show this to Edith) should I perish by shipwreck, or any other casualty, I have relations whose prejudices would then yield to the anguish of affection, and who would love, cherish, and yield all possible consolation to my widow. Of such an evil there is but a possibility: but against possibility it was my duty to guard. . . . .

Farewell!

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"29 Nov. 1795.

"Bedford, our summons arrived this morning, the vessel goes Tuesday, and when you receive this I shall be casting up my accounts with the fishes.

"Grosvenor, you have my will, if the ship founders, or any other chance sends me to supper. All my papers are yours: part are with my mother, and part with Edith. Relic worship is founded upon human feelings, and you will value them. There is little danger of accidents, but there can be no harm in these few lines. All my letters are at your disposal; and if I be drowned, do not you be surprised if I pay you a visit; for if permitted, and if it can be done without terrifying or any ways injuring you, I certainly will do it.

"But I shall visit you *in propriâ personâ* in the summer.

"Would you had been with me on the 14th! 'twas a melancholy day, yet mingled with such feelings.

"You will get a letter from Madrid — write you to Lisbon. I expect to find letters there, and this expectation will form the pleasantest thought I shall experience in my journey.

"I should like to find your Musæus at Bristol on my return; if you will direct it to Miss Fricker (heighho! Grosvenor), at Mr. Cottle's, High Street, Bristol, he will convey it to her; and, I believe, next to receiving anything from me, something for me and from my friend, will be the most agreeable occurrence during my absence. *I give you this direction as it will be sure to reach her.* Edith will be as a parlour boarder with the Miss Cottles (his sisters), two women of elegant and accomplished manners. The eldest lived as governess in Lord Derby's family a little while; and you will have some opinion of them

when I say that they make even bigotry amiable. They are very religious, and the eldest (who is but twenty-three) wished me to read good books — the advice comes from the heart: she thinks very highly of me, but fancies me irreligious, because I attend no place of worship, and indulge speculations beyond reason.

"God bless and prosper you, and grant I may find you as happy on my arrival as I hope and expect to be.

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT SOUTHEY."

"Falmouth, Monday evening.

"Well, Grosvenor, here I am, waiting for a wind. Your letter arrived a few hours before me. . . . . Edith you will see and know and love; but her virtues are of the domestic order, and you will love her in proportion as you know her. I hate your daffydowndilly women, aye, and men too; — the violet is ungaudy in the appearance, though a sweeter flower perfumes not the evening gale. 'Tis equally her wish to see you. Oh! Grosvenor, when I think of our winter evenings that will arrive, and then look at myself arrayed for a voyage in an inn parlour! I scarcely know whether the tear that starts into my eye proceeds from anticipated pleasure or present melancholy. I am never comfortable at an inn; boughten hospitalities are two ill connected ideas.

Grosvenor, I half shudder to think that a plank only will divide the husband of Edith from the unfathomed ocean! and did I believe its efficacy, could burn a hecatomb to Neptune with as much devotion as ever burned or smoked in Phæacia.

Farewell!

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

CHAPTER IV.

LETTERS TO MR. LOVEL AND MR. BEDFORD FROM LISBON. — RETURN TO ENGLAND. — DEATH OF MR. LOVEL. — LETTERS TO MR. BEDFORD. — LITERARY EMPLOYMENTS AND INTENTIONS. — 1796.

THE two following letters are the only ones written from Lisbon at this time that I shall lay before the reader. A series of descriptive letters, written during a subsequent and longer visit to that country, will appear in the next volume.

To Robert Lovel.

"Feb. 19. 1796.

"I have an invincible dislike to saying the same things in two different letters, and yet you must own it is no easy matter, to write half a dozen different ones, upon the same subject. I am at Lisbon, and therefore all my friends expect some account of Portugal; but it is not pleasant to reiterate terms of abuse, and continually to present to my own mind objects of filth and deformity. By way of improving your English cookery, take the Portuguese receipt for dressing rabbits. 'The spit is placed either above the fire, below the fire, by the side of the fire, or in the fire; (this is when they have a spit, and that is little better than an iron skewer, for they *roast* meat in a *jug*, and *boil* it in a frying-pan;) to know if it is

done they crack the joints with their fingers, and then lay it aside till it cools, then they seize the rabbit, tear it piecemeal with their fingers into rags, and fry it up with oil, garlic, and aniseed. I have attempted sausages made of nothing but garlic and aniseed; they cut off the rump of a bird always before they dress it, and neither prayers nor entreaties can save a woodcock from being drawn and quartered. R—— (who never got up till we were in sight of Corunna) lay in his bed studying what would be the best dinner when we landed; he at last fixed upon a leg of mutton, soles and oyster sauce, and toasted cheese — to the no small amusement of those who knew he could get neither, and to his no small disappointment when he sat down to a chicken fried in oil, and an omelet of oil and eggs. He leapt out of bed in the middle of his first night in Spain, in order to catch the fleas, who made it too hot for him.

Miss* remains in Lord Bute's stables, in Madrid: —she amused me on the road by devouring one pair of horsehair socks, one tooth-brush, one comb, a pound of raisins, do. of English beef, and one pair of shoes: Maber has as much reason to remember her. So you see Miss lived well upon the road. Tossed about as I have been by the convulsions of air, water, and earth, and enduring what I have from the want of the other element, I am in high health. My uncle and I never molest each other by our different principles. I used to work Maber sometimes, but

* A favourite dog.

here there is no one whom I am so intimate with, or with whom I wish intimacy. Here is as much visiting and as little society as you can wish; and a Bristol alderman may have his fill of good eating and drinking; yet is this metropolis supplied only from hand to mouth, and when the boats cannot come from Alentejo, the markets are destitute; at this time there is no fuel to be bought! Barbary supplies them with corn, and that at so low a rate, that the farmers do not think it worth while to bring their corn to market, so that the harvest of last year is not yet touched. They cannot grind the Barbary corn in England: it is extremely hard, and the force and velocity of English mills reduce the husk as well as the grain to powder. I learnt all this from the Vice Consul, who has written much to Lord Grenville on the subject, and proposed damping the corn previous to grinding it, so as to prevent the bran from pulverising. Lord G. has even sent for grindstones to Lisbon, in hopes they might succeed better. It is melancholy to reflect on what a race possesses the fertile coasts of Barbary! Yet are these Portuguese not a degree above them. You may form some idea how things are managed in this country from the history of the present war: by treaty the Portuguese were to furnish the English with a certain number of ships, or a certain sum of money; and the Spaniards with troops or money; the money was expected, but the Secretary of State, Mello, argued that it was more politic to lay it out among their own countrymen, and make soldiers and sailors. The old boy's measures were vigorous; he sent for the

general of one of the provinces, appointed him commander in Brazil, and ordered him to be ready at an hour's notice; but old Mello fell ill, and the general, after remaining three months at Lisbon (for during Mello's illness the other party managed affairs), he found no more probability of departing than on the first day, and he accordingly sent for his furniture, wife, and family to Lisbon. Soon after they arrived the secretary recovered,—every thing was hurried for the expedition, — and the wife, family and furniture, sent home again. Mello fell ill again, every thing was at a stand, and the general once more called his family to Lisbon. The old fellow recovered; sent them all home again; put everything in readiness, fell ill again, and died. The measures of the government have ever since been uniformly languid; and, though the stupid hounds sent ships to England, and troops to Spain, they never believed themselves at war with France till the French took their ships at the mouth of the river!

"The meeting of the two Courts at Badajos is supposed to have been political, and it was surmised that Spain meant to draw Portugal into an alliance with France: they, however, parted on bad terms. War with Spain is not improbable, and, if our minister knew how to conduct it, would amply repay the expenses of the execrable contest. The Spanish settlements could not resist a well-ordered expedition, and humanity would be benefited by the delivery of that country from so heavy a yoke. There is a very seditious Spaniard there now, preaching Atheism and

Isocracy; one of Godwin's school; for Godwin has his pupils in Spain.

"I can see no paper here but the London Chronicle, and those every other day papers are good for nothing. Coleridge is at Birmingham, I hear; and I hear of his projected 'Watchman.' I send five letters by this post to Bristol, and two to London,—a tolerable job for one who keeps no secretary. I shall send four by the Magician frigate, and four more by the next packet. This is pretty well, considering I read very hard, and spend every evening in company. . . . . I know not why I have lost all relish for theatrical amusements, of which no one was once more fond. The round of company here is irksome to me, and a select circle of intimate friends is the *summum bonum* I propose to myself. I leave this country in April; and, when once I reach England, shall cross the seas no more. O the super-celestial delights of the road from Falmouth to Launceston! Yet I do believe that Christian, in the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' felt little more pleasure at his journey's end than I shall in traversing the lovely hills and plains of Cornwall. . . . . John Kett was of great service to me in Spain, and will return to England, where, as soon as I shall have pitched my tent, I purpose burning him a sacrifice to the household gods, and inurning his ashes with a suitable epitaph. Then shall *sans culotte* be hung upon the wall, and I will make a trophy of my travelling shoes and fur cap. I am now going out to dinner; then to see a procession; then to talk French; then to a huge assembly, from whence there is no returning

before one o'clock. O midnight! midnight! when a man does murder thee, he ought at least to get something by it.

"Here are most excellent wines, which I do in no small degree enjoy: the best Port; Bucellas of exquisite quality; old Hock, an old gentleman for whom I have a very great esteem; Cape, and I have 'good hope' of getting some to-day; and Malmsey such as makes a man envy Clarence. . . .

. . . . . .

"Farewell! Love to Mrs. L. .

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Feb. 24. 1796., Lisbon, from which God grant me a speedy deliverance.

"I am bitterly disappointed at not finding 'The Flagellant' here, of which I sent my only copy to my uncle. It was my intention to have brought it home again with me. You see, Grosvenor, this relic is already become rare. Have you received the original Joan of Arc, written at Brixton, bound decently, &c.? I left it with Cottle, to send with your copy: he has the transcript of it himself, which he begged with most friendly devotion, and, I believe, values as much as a monk does the parings of his tutelary saint's great toe-nail. Is not the preface a hodge-podge of inanity? I had written the beginning only

before I quitted Bristol. The latter days of my residence there, were occupied by concerns too nearly interesting, to allow time for a collected mass of composition; and you will believe that, after quitting Edith on Sunday evening, I was little fit to write a preface on Monday morning. I never saw the whole of it together; and, I believe, after making a few hasty remarks on epic poems, I forgot to draw the conclusion for which only they were introduced. *N'importe;* the ill-natured critic may exercise malignity in dissecting it, and the friendly one his ingenuity in finding out some excuse.

"What has all this to do with Lisbon? say you. Take a sonnet for the ladies, imitated from the Spanish of Bartolomi Leonardo, in which I have given the author at least as many ideas as he has given me.

"Nay, cleanse this filthy mixture from thy hair,
And give the untricked tresses to the gale;
The sun, as lightly on the breeze they sail,
Shall gild the bright brown locks: thy cheek is fair,
Away then with this artificial hue,
This blush eternal! lady, to thy face
Nature has given no imitable grace.
Why these black spots obtruding on the view
The lily cheek, and these ear jewels too,
That ape the barbarous Indian's vanity!
Thou need'st not with that necklace there invite
The prying gaze; we know thy neck is white.
Go to thy dressing room again, and be
Artful enough to learn simplicity."

"Could you not swear to the author if you had seen this in the newspaper? You must know, Bedford, I have a deadly aversion to anything merely ornamental in female dress. Let the dress be as

elegant (*i.e.* as simple) as possible, but hang on none of your gewgaw eye-traps.

"Do write to me, and promise me a visit at Bristol in the summer; for, after I have returned to Edith, I will never quit her again, so that we shall remain there till I settle doggedly to law, which I hope will be during the next winter.

"Friday, 24th.

"Timothy Dwight (Bedford, I defy you or Mr. Shandy to physiognomise that man's name rightly. What historian is it who, in speaking of Alexander's feast, says they listened to *one Timothy*, a musician?) Timothy Dwight, an American, published, in 1785, an heroic poem on the conquest of Canaan. I had heard of it, and long wished to read it, in vain; but now, the American minister (a good-natured man, whose poetry is worse than anything except his criticism) has lent me the book. There certainly is some merit in the poem; but, when Colonel Humphreys speaks of it, he will not allow me to put in a word in defence of John Milton. If I had written upon this subject I should have been terribly tempted to take part with the Canaanites, for whom I cannot help feeling a kind of brotherly compassion. There is a fine ocean of ideas floating about in my brain-pan for Madoc, and a high delight do I feel in sometimes indulging them till self-forgetfulness follows.

"'Tis a vile kind of philosophy, that for to-morrow's prospect glooms to-day; *àpropos*, sit down when you have no better employment, and find all the faults

you can in 'The Retrospect'* against I return. It wants the pruning knife before it be re-published. . . . . When I correct Joan, I shall call you in — not as plenipotent amputator — you shall mark what you think the warts, wens, and cancers, and I will take care you do not cut deep enough to destroy the life. The fourth book is the best. Do you know I have never seen the whole poem together, and that one book was printing before another was begun? The characters of Conrade and Theodore are totally distinct; and yet, perhaps, equally interesting. There is too much fighting; I found the battles detestable to write, as you will do to read; yet there are not ten better lines in the whole piece than those beginning, — 'Of unrecorded name died the mean man, yet did he leave behind,' &c.†

"Do you remember the days when you wrote No. 3. at Brixton? We dined on mutton chops and

* "The Retrospect" was published, among some poems by my father and Mr. Lovel, in the autumn of 1794.

† "Of unrecorded name
The soldier died; and yet he left behind
One who then never said her daily prayers
Of him forgetful; who to every tale
Of the distant war lending an eager ear,
Grew pale and trembled. At her cottage door
The wretched one shall sit, and with fix'd eye
Gaze on the path, where on his parting steps
Her last look hung. Nor ever shall she know
Her husband dead, but cherishing a hope,
Whose falsehood inwardly she knows too well,
Feel life itself with that false hope decay;
And wake at night with miserable dreams
Of his return, and weeping o'er her babe,
Too surely think that soon that fatherless child
Must of its mother also be bereft."

Joan of Arc, 7th Book.

eggs. I have the note you wrote for Dodd* among your letters. I anticipate a very pleasant evening when you shall show the cedar box† to Edith. 'Oh, pleasant days of fancy!' By the by, if ever you read aloud that part of the fifth book, mind that erratum in the description of the Famine,—

> '"With jealous eye,
> Hating a rival's look, the husband hides
> His miserable meal."

After I had corrected the page and left town, poor Cottle, whose heart overflows with the milk of human kindness, read it over, and he was as little able to bear the picture of the husband, as he would have been to hide a morsel from the hungry; and, suo periculo, he altered it to '*Each man conceals,*' and spoilt the climax. I was very much vexed, and yet I loved Cottle the better for it.

"No, Grosvenor, you and I shall not talk politics. I am weary of them, and little love politicians; for me, I shall think of domestic life, and confine my wishes within the little circle of friendship. The rays become more intense, in proportion as they are drawn to a point. Heighho! I should be very happy were I now in England: with Edith by the fireside, I would listen to the pelting rain with pleasure,—now it is melancholy music, yet fitly harmonizing with my hanging mood.

"Farewell! write long letters.

R. S.

* One of the Westminster masters.

† The depository of the contributions to "The Flagellant."

"P. S. In many parts of Spain they have female shavers: the proper name of one should be *Barbara*."

My father's visit to Lisbon did not exceed the anticipated time, — six months; and his next letter to his friend is written in the first moments of joy on his return.

"Portsmouth, May 15. 1796.

"Thanks be to God, I am in England!

"Bedford, you may conceive the luxury of that ejaculation, if you know the miseries of a sea voyage; even the stoic who loves nothing, and the merchant whose trade-tainted heart loves nothing but wealth, would echo it. Judge you with what delight Robert Southey leapt on terra firma.

"To-night I go to Southampton; to-morrow will past pains become pleasant.

"Now, Grosvenor, is happiness a sojourner on earth, or must man be cat-a-ninetailed by care, until he shields himself in a shroud? My future destiny will not decide the problem, for I find a thousand pleasures, and a thousand pains, of which nine-tenths of the world know nothing. . . . Come to Bristol, be with me there as long as you can. I almost add, advise me there, but your advice will come too late.

"I am sorry you could ask if you did wrong in showing Wynn my letter. I have not a thought secret from him. . . . My passage was very good, and I must be the best-tempered fellow in Great Britain, for the devil a drop of gall is there left in my bile bag. I intend a hymn to the Dii Penates. Write to me directly, and direct to Cottle. I have, as yet, no

where to choose my place of rest. I shall soon have enough to place me above want, and till that arrives, shall support myself in ease and comfort like a silk worm, by spinning my own brains. If poor necessity were without hands as well as legs, badly would she be off.

"Lord Somerville is dead,—no matter to me I believe, for the estates were chiefly copyhold, and Cannon Southey minded wine and women too much to think of renewing for the sake of his heirs. . . . Farewell.

"We landed last night at eleven o'clock; left Lisbon on Thursday 5th, and were becalmed south of the rock till breakfast time on Saturday; so that our passage was remarkably good."

My father's visit to Lisbon seems chiefly to have been useful to him by giving him an acquaintance with the Spanish and Portuguese languages, and by laying the foundation of that love for the literature of those countries, which continued through life, and which he afterwards turned to good account. These advantages, however, could not be perceived at the time; and, as he returned to England with the same determination not to take orders, the same political bias, and the same romantic feelings, as he left it, Mr. Hill felt naturally some disappointment at the result.

His comments on his nephew's character at this time are interesting:—"He is a very good scholar," he writes to a friend, "of great reading, of an astonishing memory: when he speaks he does it with

fluency, with a great choice of words. He is perfectly correct in his behaviour, of the most exemplary morals, and the best of hearts. Were his character different, or his abilities not so extraordinary, I should be the less concerned about him; but to see a young man of such talents as he possesses, by the misapplication of them, lost to himself and to his family, is what hurts me very sensibly. In short, he has every thing you would wish a young man to have, excepting common sense or prudence."

Of this latter quality my father possessed more than his uncle here gives him credit for. In all his early difficulties, (as well as through life) he never contracted a single debt he was unable promptly to discharge, or allowed himself a single personal comfort beyond his means, which, never abundant, had been, and were for many years, greatly straitened; and from them, narrow as they were, he had already begun to give that assistance to other members of his family which he continued to do until his latest years. It is probable, however, that Mr. Hill here chiefly alludes to his readiness to avow his peculiar views in politics and religion.

Immediately on his return, my father and mother fixed themselves in lodgings in Bristol, where they remained during the ensuing summer and autumn. My father's chief employment at this time was in preparing a volume of "Letters from Spain and Portugal" for the press; and also in writing occasionally for the Monthly Magazine. His own letters will describe the course of his occupations, opinions, and prospects during this period. The first of them al-

ludes to the death of his brother-in-law, as well as brother-poet, Mr. Lovel, who had been cut off, in the early prime of youth, during my father's absence abroad. He had been taken ill with a fever while at Salisbury, and travelling home in hot weather before he was sufficiently recovered, relapsed immediately, and died; leaving his widow and one child without any provision. She (who, during my father's life, found a home with him, and who now, at an advanced age, is a member of my household) is the sole survivor of those whose eager hopes once centered in Pantisocracy: one of the last of that generation so fast passing away from us!

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"May 27. 1796.

"Poor Lovel! I am in hopes of raising something for his widow by publishing his best pieces, if only enough to buy her a harpsichord. . . . . The poems will make a five-shilling volume, which I preface, and to which I shall prefix an epistle to Mary Lovel. Will you procure me some subscribers? . . . Many a melancholy reflection obtrudes. What I am doing for him you, Bedford, may one day perform for me. How short my part in life may be He only knows who assigned it; I must be only anxious to discharge it well.

"How does time mellow down our opinions! Little of that ardent enthusiasm which so lately fevered my whole character remains. I have contracted my

sphere of action within the little circle of my own friends, and even my wishes seldom stray beyond it. A little candle will give light enough to a moderate-sized room; place it in a church, it will only 'teach light to counterfeit a gloom;' and, in the street, the first wind extinguishes it. Do you understand this, or shall I send you to Quarles' Emblems?

"I am hardly yet in order; and, whilst that last word was writing, arrived the parcel containing what, through all my English wanderings, have accompanied me — your letters. Aye, Grosvenor, our correspondence is valuable, for it is the history of the human heart during its most interesting stages. I have now bespoke a letter-case, where they shall repose in company with another series, now, blessed be God, complete — my letters to Edith. Bedford, who will be worthy to possess them when we are gone? 'Odi profanum vulgus;' must I make a funeral pile by my death-bed?

"Would that I were so settled as not to look on to another removal. I want a little room to arrange my books in, and some Lares of my own. Shall we not be near one another? Aye, Bedford, as intimate as John Doe and Richard Roe, with whose memoirs I shall be so intimately acquainted; and there are two other cronies — John a Nokes, and Jack a Styles, always like Gyas and Cloanthus, and the two kings of Brentford hand in hand. Oh I will be a huge lawyer. . . .

Come soon. My 'dearest friend' expects you with almost as much pleasure and impatience as

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"June 12. 1796.

. . . . . .

"I have declared war against metaphysics, and would push my arguments as William Pitt would his *successes*, even to the extermination of the enemy. 'Blessed be the hour I 'scaped the wrangling crew.'

"I think it may be proved, that all the material and necessarian controversies are 'much ado about nothing;' that they end exactly where they began; and that all the moral advantages said to result from them by the illuminated, are fairly and more easily deducible from religion, or even from common sense.

. . . . . .

What of Carlisle's wings? I believe my flying scheme — that of breaking in condors and riding them — is the best; or if a few *rocs* could be naturalised — though it might be a *hard* matter to *break* them. Seriously, I am very far from convinced that flying is impossible, and have an admirable tale of a Spanish bird for one of my letters, which will just suit Carlisle. . . . Yes, your friends shall be mine, but it is we (in the dual number) who must be intimate. If Momus had made a window in my breast, I should by this time have had sense enough to add a window-shutter. London is not the only place for me: I have an unspeakable loathing for that huge city. 'God made the country, and man made the town.' Now, as God made me likewise, I love the country. Here I am in the skirts of Bristol; and in ten minutes

in a beautiful country; and in half an hour among rocks and woods, with no other company than the owls and jackdaws, with whom I fraternise in solitude; but London! — it is true that you and Wynn will supply the place of the owls and jackdaws, but Brixton is not the country: the poplars of Pownall Terrace cannot supply the want of a wild wood; and, with all my imagination, I cannot mistake a milestone for a rock: but these are among the *τα ουκ εφ' ήμιν*. It is within doors, and not without, that happiness dwells, like a vestal watching the fire of the Penates. . . . . .

"I have told you what I am about; writing letters to the world is not, however, quite so agreeable as writing to you, and I do not love shaping a good thing into a good sentence. . . . Then for a volume of poems, and then for the Abridgment of the Laws, or the Lawyer's Pocket Companion, in fifty-two volumes folio! Is it not a pity, Grosvenor, that I should not execute my intention of writing more verses than Lope de Vega, more tragedies than Dryden, and more epic poems than Blackmore? The more I write, the more I have to write. I have a Helicon kind of dropsy upon me, and *crescit indulgens sibi*. The quantity of verses I wrote at Brixton is astonishing; my mind was never more employed: I killed wasps, and was very happy. And so I will again, Grosvenor, though employed on other themes; and, if ever man was happy because he resolved to be so, I will.

Of Lightfoot it is long since I have heard anything.

"'When blew the loud blast in the air,
So shrill, so full of woe,
Unable such a voice to bear,
Down fell Jericho.'

"Lightfoot, on the authority of some rum old book, used to assert the existence of a tune that would shake a wall down, by insinuating its sounds into the wall, and vibrating so strongly as to shake it down. Now, Grosvenor, to those lines in the fourth book of Joan that allude to Orlando's magic horn, was I going to make a note, which, by the help of you and Lightfoot, would have been a very quaint one, and by the help of Dr. Geddes, not altogether unlearned, not to mention great erudition in quotations from Boyardo, Ariosto, Archbishop Turpin, and Spencer.

"Farewell, Grosvenor! Have you read Count Rumford's Essays? I am ashamed to say that I have not yet. Have you read Fawcett's Art of War? With all the faults of Young, it possesses more beauties, and is, in many parts, in my opinion, excellent.

R. S."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"June 26. 1796.

"Take the whole of the Spanish poem, it is by George of Montemayor, addressed by Sireno to a lock of Diana's hair, whom, returning after twelve months' absence, he finds married to another.

"'Ah me, thou relic of that faithless fair!
Sad changes have I suffered since that day,
When in this valley from her long loose hair
I bore thee — relic of my love — away.
Well did I then believe Diana's truth,
For soon true love each jealous care represses,
And fondly thought that never other youth
Should wanton with the maiden's unbound tresses.

There, on the cold clear Ezla's breezy side,
My hand amid her ringlets wont to rove,
She proffered now the lock, and now denied,
With all the baby playfulness of love.
There the false maid, with many an artful tear,
Made me each rising thought of doubt discover,
And vowed, and wept, till hope had ceased to fear,
Ah me! beguiling like a child her lover.

"'Witness thou, how that fondest, falsest fair,
Has sighed and wept on Ezla's sheltered shore,
And vowed eternal truth, and made me swear
My heart no jealousy should harbour more.
Ah! tell me, could I but believe those eyes,
Those lovely eyes with tears my cheek bedewing,
When the mute eloquence of tears and sighs
I felt and trusted, and embraced my ruin?

"'So false, and yet so fair! so fair a mien
Veiling so false a mind, who ever knew?
So true, and yet so wretched! who has seen
A man like me, so wretched and so true?
Fly from me on the wind! for you have seen
How kind she was, how loved by her you knew me.
Fly, fly! vain witness what I once have been,
Nor dare, all wretched as I am, to view me!

"'One evening, on the river's pleasant strand,
The maid, too well beloved! sat with me,
And with her finger traced upon the sand,
Death for Diana, not inconstancy.
And love beheld us from his secret stand,
And marked his triumph, laughing to behold me;
To see me trust a writing traced in sand,
To see me credit what a woman told me.'*

* Since copying this beautiful translation, I have found that my father had inserted it in his "Letters from Spain and Portugal." I think, notwithstanding, the reader will not be displeased to see it here.

"If you can add anything to the terseness of the conclusion, or the simplicity of the whole, do it. The piece itself is very beautiful.

"My letters occupy more of my time and less of my mind than I could wish. Conceive Garagantua eating wood strawberries one at a time, or green peas, or the old dish—pap with a fork, and you will have some idea how my mind feels in dwelling on desultory topics. Joan of Arc was a whole,—it was something to think of every moment of solitude, and to dream of at night; my heart was in the poem; I threw my own feelings into it in my own language, aye, and out of one part of it and another, you may find my own character. Seriously, Grosvenor, to go on with Madoc is *almost* necessary to my happiness: I had rather leave off eating than poetizing; but these things must be;—I will feed upon law and digest it, or it shall choke me. Did you ever pop upon a seditious ode in the ludicrous style, addressed to the cannibals? It was in the Courier and Telegraph; a stray sheep marked Caius Gracchus, to which you may place another signature.

"Grosvenor, I do not touch on aught interesting to-night. I am conversing with you now in that easy, calm, good-humoured state of mind, which is, perhaps, the *summum bonum*,—the less we think of the world the better. . . . . My feelings were once like an ungovernable horse; now I have tamed Bucephalus; he retains his spirit and his strength, but they are made useful, and he shall not break my neck. . . . . This is, indeed a change; but the liquor that ceases to ferment, does

not immediately become flat, — the beer then becomes fine, and continues so till it is dead.

"To-morrow Wynn comes; shall I find him altered? Would that I were among you. If unremitting assiduity can procure me independence, that prize shall be mine. Christian went a long way to fling off his burthen in the Pilgrim's Progress. . . . I doubt only my lungs; I find my breath affected when I read aloud, but exercise may strengthen them.

"When do you come? It was wisely done of the old conjuror, who kept six princesses transformed into cats, to tie each of them fast, and put a mouse close to her nose without her being able to catch it. For the nearer we are to a good, the more do we necessarily desire it, — the attraction becomes more powerful as we approach the magnet. . . .

"Do not despise Godwin too much. . . . He will do good by defending Atheism in print, because when the arguments are known, they may be easily and satisfactorily answered. Tell Carlisle to ask him this question, —if man were made by the casual meeting of atoms, how could he have supported himself without superior assistance? The use of the muscles is only attained by practice, — how could he have fed himself? how know from what cause hunger proceeded? how know by what means to remedy the pain? The question appears to me decisive. . . . Merry (of whose genius, erroneous as it was, I always thought highly) has published the 'Pains of Memory'; a subject once given me, and from which some lines in Joan of Arc are extracted. Farewell!

R. S."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"July 17. 1796.

. . . . .

"Besides my letters I write for the Monthly Magazine. This is a new job: you may easily trace me there if it be worth your while. They give five guineas a sheet, but their sheets are sixteen closely printed pages. I manufacture up my old rubbish for them, with a little about Spanish literature. I shall be glad to get rid of all this.

"So you abuse Anna St. Ives, and commend the Pucelle of the detestable Voltaire. Now, Grosvenor, it was not I who said, 'I *have not* read that book;'—*I* said — God be thanked that I did say it, and plague take the boobies who mutilated it in my absence,—I said, 'I have *never been guilty* of reading the Pucelle of Voltaire.' Report speaks it worthy of its author — a man whose wit and genius could only be equalled by his depravity. I will tell you what a man, not particularly nice in his moral opinions, said to me upon the subject of that book,—'I should think the worse of any man who, having read one canto of it, could proceed to a second.' . . . . Now, my opinion of Anna St. Ives is diametrically opposed to yours. I think it a book of consummate wisdom, and I shall join my forces to Mrs. Knowles, to whom I desire you would make my fraternal respects.

"Sunday.

"How has this letter been neglected! no more delays, however. I am continually writing or read-

ing: — the double cacoethes grow upon me every day; and the physic of John Nokes, by which I must get cured, is sadly nauseous. *N'importe.* I wish I were in London, for if industry can do anything for anybody, it shall for me. My plan is to study from five in the morning till eight, from nine to twelve, and from one to four. The evening is my own. Now, Grosvenor, do you think I would do this, if I had a pigsty of my own in the country?

"So goes the world! There is not a man in it who is not discontented. However, if no man had more reason for discontent than you and I have, it would be already a very good world; for, after all, I believe the worst we complain of is, that we do not find mankind as good as we could wish. . . . . Many of our mental evils — and God knows they are the worst — we make ourselves.

"If a young man had his senses about him when he sets out in life, he should seriously deliberate, whether he had rather never be miserable, or sometimes be happy. I like the up and down road best; but I have learned never to despise any man's opinion because it is different from my own. Surely, Grosvenor, our restlessness in this world seems to indicate that we are intended for a better. We have all of us a longing after happiness; and surely the Creator will gratify all the natural desires that he has implanted in us. If you die before me, will you visit me? I am half a believer in apparitions, and would purchase conviction at the expense of a tolerable fright.

"George Burnett's uncle was for three months ter-

ribly afflicted by the nightmare, — so much so that, by being constantly disturbed, his health was considerably impaired. One night he determined to lie awake and watch for HER.

"'Oh Bedford, Bedford,
If ever thou didst a good story love!'

One night, he says, he determined to lie awake and watch for HER. At the usual hour he heard HER coming up the stairs; he got up in the bed in a cold sweat; he heard HER come into the room; he heard HER open the curtain, and then — he leaped out of bed and caught HER by the hair before SHE — for SHE it was — could fall upon his breast. Then did this most incomparable hero bellow to John for a candle. They fought; she pulled and he pulled, and bellowed till John came with a light; and then — she vanished immediately, and he remained with a handful of HER hair.

"Now, Bedford, would you not have had that made into a locket? The tale, methinks, is no bad companion for your father's dream. The exploit of Mr. Burnett is far beyond that of St. Withold — though, by the by, he met the nine foals into the bargain — and *they made a bargain.*

"I have written you an odd letter, and an ugly one, upon very execrable paper. By the by, if you have a Prudentius, you may serve me by sending me all he says about a certain Saint Eulalia, who suffered martyrdom at Merida. I passed through that city, and should like to see his hymn upon the occasion; and if there be any good in it, put it in a note.

How mortifying is this confinement of yours! I had planned so many pleasant walks, to be made so much more pleasant by conversation;

> "For I have much to tell thee, much to say
> Of the odd things we saw upon our journey,
> Much of the dirt and vermin that annoyed us.

And you should have seen my letters, before they went to press, and annotated them, and heard the plot of my tragedy; but now! I have a mortal aversion to all these disjunctive particles: *but*, and *if*, and *yet*, always herald some bad news. . . . . I shall be settled in London, I hope, before Christmas. I do not remember a happier ten weeks than I passed at Brixton, nor, indeed, a better employed period. God grant me ten such weeks of leisure once more in my life, and I will finish Madoc.

God bless you.

R. S."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"July 31. 1796.

"Oh that you could bring Bristol to the sea! For as for bringing the sea to Bristol, that could not be done, as Trim says, 'unless it pleased God;' and, as Toby says, how the devil should it? I must not ask you to come to me, and I cannot come to you. . . . . For your club, I grant you a few hours once a fortnight will not make me worse; but will they make me better? and if they will not, why

should I quit the fireside? You will be in a state of requisition perpetually with me; and it seems you have bespoke a place in my heart for Carlisle, but I will not let in too many there, because I do not much like being obliged to turn them out.

"Lenora is partly borrowed from an old English ballad —

"Is there any room at your head, William?
Is there any room at your feet?
Is there any room at your side, William,
Wherein I may creep?

"There's no room at my head, Margerett,
There's no room at my feet;
There's no room at my side, Margerett,
My coffin is made so meet!"

But the other ballad of Bürger, in the Monthly Magazine, is most excellent. I know no commendation equal to its merit; read it again, Grosvenor, and read it aloud. The man who wrote that should have been ashamed of Lenora. Who is this Taylor? I suspected they were by Sayers.

"Have you read Cabal and Love? In spite of a translation for which the translator deserves hanging, the fifth act is dreadfully affecting. I want to write my tragedies of the Banditti —

"Of Sebastian,
"Of Iñez de Castro,
"Of the Revenge of Pedro.
"My epic poem, in twenty books, of Madoc.
"My novel, in three volumes, of Edmund Oliver.
"My romance of ancient history of Alcas.
"My Norwegian tale of —— Harfagne

"My Oriental poem of The Destruction of the Dom Daniel.

"And in case I adopt Rousseau's system –

"My ——.Pains of Imagination.

"There, Grosvenor, all these I want to write!

Οτοττοτοί!

"A comical Cornish curate, who saw me once or twice, has written me a quaint letter, and sent me a specimen of his Paradise Found!!!!

"Wynn wishes me to live near Lincoln's Inn, because, in a year's time, it will be necessary for me to be with a special pleader; but I wish to live on the other side of Westminster Bridge, because it will be much more necessary to be within an evening's walk of Brixton. To all serious studies I bid adieu when I enter upon my London lodgings. The law will neither amuse me, nor ameliorate me, nor instruct me; but the moment it gives me a comfortable independence—and I have but few wants,—then farewell to London. I will get me some little house near the sea, and near a country town, for the sake of the post and the bookseller; and you shall pass as much of the summer with me as you can, and I will see you in the winter,—that is, if you do not come and live by me; and then we will keep mastiffs like Carlisle, and make the prettiest theories, and invent the best systems for mankind; aye, and become great philanthropists, when we associate only among ourselves and the fraternity of dogs, cats, and cabbages; for as for poultry, I do not like eating what I have *fed*, and as for pigs, they are too like the multitude. There, in the cultivation of poetry and potatoes I will be inno-

cently employed, not but I mean to aspire to higher things; aye, Grosvenor, I will make cyder and mead, and try more experiments upon wine than a London vintner; and perhaps, Grosvenor, the first Christmas-day you pass with me after I am so settled, we may make a Christmas fire of all my law books. Amen, so be it. . . . .

"I hope to get out my Letters by Michaelmas-day, and the Poems will be ready in six weeks after that time. That done, farewell to Bristol, my native place, my home for two and twenty years, where from many causes I have endured much misery, but where I have been very happy. . . . .

"No man ever retained a more perfect knowledge of the history of his own mind than I have done. I can trace the development of my character from infancy, — for developed it has been, not changed. I look forward to the writing of this history as the most pleasing and most useful employment I shall ever undertake.

"This removal is not, however, like quitting *home*. I am never domesticated in lodgings; the hearth is unhallowed, and the Penates do not abide there. Now, Grosvenor, to let you into a secret; though I cannot afford to buy a house, or hire one, I have lately built a very pretty castle, which is, being interpreted, if I can get my play of the 'Banditti' brought on the stage, and if it succeed — hang all those little conjunctions — well, these 'ifs' granted, — I shall get money enough to furnish me a house. . . . .

God bless you!

R. S."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Bristol, August 29. 1796,
by the fireside.

". . . . Do not hurt the polypi for the sake of trying experiments; mangle the dead as much as you please, but let not Carlisle dissect dogs or frogs alive. Of all experimental surgeons, Spallanzani is the only fair one I ever heard of. He kept a kite, and gave him all his food in little bags tied to a long string, which he used to pull up again to see the process of digestion; now this was using the kite very ill, but he served himself in the same manner.

"You will, perhaps, hear of me in Sussex, certainly if you go to Rye, which is only ten miles distant from Hastings. I wish you may see the Lambs. . . . . I was a great favourite there once, more so than I shall ever be anywhere again, for the same reason that people like a kitten better than a cat, and a kid better than the venerable old goat. . . . . I have been very happy at Rye, Grosvenor, and love to remember it; you know the history of the seventeen anonymous letters that Tom and I sent down the day before we went ourselves.* There is a windmill on the bank above the house: with the glass I used to tell the hour by Rye clock from the door; which clock, by-the-by, was taken among the spoils of the Spanish Armada.

"I hope you may go there. I wrote a good many bad verses in Sussex, but they taught me to write better, and you know not how agreeable it is

* I can find no account of this excursion. It was probably during one of his Westminster holidays.

to me to meet with one of my old lines, or old ideas, in Joan of Arc. . . . . If we were together now, we would write excellent letters from Portugal. I have begun a hymn to the Penates, which will, perhaps, be the best of all my lesser pieces; it is to conclude the volume of poems. . . . . It is a great advantage to have a London bookseller: they can put off an edition of a book however stupid; and without great exertions in its favour, no book, however excellent, will sell. The sale of Joan of Arc in London has been very slow indeed. Six weeks ago Cadell had only sold three copies. . . . .

"Would I were with you! for though I hate to be on the sea, I yet wish to pitch my tent on the shore. I do not know anything more delightful than to lie on the beach in the sun, and watch the rising waves, while a thousand vague ideas pass over the mind, like the summer clouds over the water; then, it is a noble situation to Shandeize. Why is it salt? why does it ebb and flow? what sort of fellows are the mermen? &c. &c.: these are a thousand of the prettiest questions in the world to ask, on which you may guess away *ad secula seculorum* — and here am I tormented by Mr. Rosser's dilatory devils, and looking on with no small impatience to the time when I shall renounce the devil and all his works.

"I am about to leave off writing just when I have learnt what to write and how to write. . . . I mean to attempt to get a tragedy on the stage, for the mere purpose of furnishing a house, which a successful play would do for me. I know I can write one, — beyond

this all is mere conjecture,—it is, however, worth trying, for I find lodgings very disagreeable. Lodge, however, I must in London, and you will be good enough to look out for me, I hope ere long, two rooms on the Brixton side the water.

"I have a thousand things to say to you. Long absence seems to have produced no effect on us, and I still feel that perfect openness in writing to you, that I shall never feel to any other human being. Grosvenor, when we sit down in Shandy Hall, what pretty speculations shall we make! You shall be Toby, and amuse yourself by marching to Paris, I will make systems, and Horace shall be Doctor Slop.

"I have projected a useful volume, which would not occupy a month,—specimens of the early English poets, with a critical account of all their works,—only to include the less known authors and specimens never before selected; my essays would be historical and biographical, as well as critical. I can get this printed without risking anything myself. . . . .

Yours sincerely,

R. S."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Bristol, Oct. 1796.

"I know not even the day of the month, but October is somewhat advanced, and this is Friday evening. Why did I not write sooner? Excuses are bad things. I have much to employ me, though I can always make a little leisure. If you were married, Grosvenor, you would know the luxury of sitting indolently by the fireside; at present you only half

know it. There is a state of complete mental torpor, very delightful, when the mind admits no sensation but that of mere existence; such a sensation I suppose plants to possess, made more vivid by the dews and gentle rains. To indulge in fanciful systems is a harmless solitary amusement, and I expect many a pleasant hour will be thus wore away, Grosvenor, when we meet. The devil never meddles with me in my unemployed moments; my day dreams are of a pleasanter nature. I should be the happiest man in the world, if I possessed enough to live with comfort in the country; but in this world, we must sacrifice the best part of our lives, to acquire that wealth, which generally arrives when the time of enjoying it is past.

. . . . . .

"I ardently wish for children; yet, if God shall bless me with any, I shall be unhappy to see them poisoned by the air of London.

> "'Sir, — I do thank God for it, — I do hate
> Most heartily that city.'

So said John Donne; 'tis a favourite quotation of mine. My spirits always sink when I approach it. Green fields are my delight. I am not only better in health, but even in heart, in the country. A fine day exhilarates my heart; if it rains, I behold the grass assume a richer verdure as it drinks the moisture: everything that I behold is very good, except man; and in London I see nothing but man and his works. A country clergyman, with a tolerable income, is surely in a very enviable situation.

Surely we have a thousand things to *transfuse* into each other, which the lazy language of the pen cannot express with sufficient rapidity. Your illness was very unfortunate. I could wish once to show you the pleasant spots where I have so often wandered, and the cavern where I have written so many verses. You should have known Cottle, too, for a worthier heart you never knew.

"You love the sea. Whenever I pitch my tent, it shall be by it. When will that be? Is it not a villainous thing that poetry will not support a man, when the jargon of the law enriches so many? . . . . I had rather write an epic poem than read a brief.

"Have you read St. Pierre? If not, read that most delightful work, and you will love the author as much as I do.

"I am as sleepy an animal as ever. The rain beats hard, the fire burns bright, 'tis but eight o'clock, and I have already begun yawning. Good night, Grosvenor, lest I set you to sleep. My father always went to bed at nine o'clock. I have inherited his punctuality and his drowsiness.

God bless you.

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

"I am the lark that sings early, and early retires. What is that bird that sleeps in the morning, and is awake at night, Grosvenor? Do you remember poor Aaron?" *

* Aaron was a tame owl, kept by either my father or Mr. Bedford, I forget which, at Westminster.

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Nov. 21. 1796.

"When do I come to London? A plain question. I cannot tell, is as plain an answer. My book will be out before Christmas, and I shall then have no further business in Bristol; yet, Bedford, this is not saying when I shall leave it. The best answer is, as soon as I can, and the sooner the better. I want to be there. I want to feel myself settled, and God knows when that will be, for the settlement of a lodging is but a comfortless one. To complete comfort, a house to oneself is necessary. . . . . However, I expect to be as comfortable as it is possible to be in that cursed city, 'that huge and hateful sepulchre of men.' I detest cities, and had rather live in the fens of Lincolnshire or on Salisbury Plain than in the best situation London could furnish. The neighbourhood of you and Wynn can alone render it tolerable. I fear the air will wither me up, like one of the miserable myrtles at a town parlour window. . . . . Oh, for 'the house in the woods and the great dog!'

"I already feel intimate with Carlisle, but I am a very snail in company, Grosvenor, and pop into my shell whenever I am approached, or roll myself up like a hedgehog, in my rough outside. It is strange, but I never approach London without feeling my heart sink within me; an unconquerable heaviness oppresses me in its atmosphere, and all its associated ideas are painful. With a little house in the country,

and a bare independence, how much more useful should I be, and how much more happy! It is not talking nonsense when I say that the London air is as bad for the mind as for the body, for the mind is a cameleon that receives its colours from surrounding objects. In the country, everything is good, everything in nature is beautiful. The benevolence of Deity is everywhere presented to the eye, and the heart participates in the tranquillity of the scene. In the town my soul is continually disgusted by the vices, follies, and consequent miseries of mankind.

"My future studies, too. Now, I never read a book without learning something, and never write a line of poetry, without cultivating some feeling of benevolence and honesty; but the law is a horrid jargon — a quibbling collection of voluminous nonsense; but this I must wade through, — aye, and I will wade through,—and when I shall have got enough to live in the country, you and I will make my first Christmas fire of all my new books. Oh, Grosvenor, what a blessed bonfire! The devil uses the statutes at large for fuel, when he gives an attorney his house warming.

"I shall have some good poems to send you shortly. Your two birthday odes are printed; your name looks well in capitals, and I have pleased myself by the motto prefixed to them: it is from Akenside. Shall I leave you to guess it? I hate guessing myself.

"'Oh, my faithful friend!
Oh early chosen! ever found the same,
And trusted, and beloved; once more the verse,
Long-destined, always obvious to thine ear,
Attend indulgent.'

"My Triumph of Woman is manufactured into a tolerable poem. My Hymn to the Penates will be the best of my minor pieces. The B. B. Eclogues may possibly become popular.

"Read St. Pierre, Grosvenor; and if you ever turn Pagan, you will certainly worship him for a demigod. . . . . I want to get a tragedy out, to furnish a house with its profits. Is this a practicable scheme, allowing the merit of the drama? or would a good novel succeed better? Heighho! ways and means! . . . .

Yours sincerely,
R. S."

CHAPTER V.

GOES TO LONDON TO STUDY THE LAW. — LETTERS FROM THENCE. — TAKES LODGINGS AT BURTON IN HAMPSHIRE. — LETTERS TO MR. MAY AND MR. BEDFORD. — GOES TO BATH. — LINES BY CHARLES LAMB. — RETURNS TO LONDON. — LETTER TO MR. WYNN. — VISIT TO NORFOLK. — LETTERS FROM THENCE. — TAKES A HOUSE AT WESTBURY, NEAR BRISTOL. — EXCURSION INTO HEREFORDSHIRE. — 1797.

My father continued to reside in Bristol until the close of the year 1796, chiefly employed, as we have seen, in working up the contents of his foreign note-books into "Letters from Spain and Portugal," which were published in one volume early in the following year. This task completed, he determined to take up his residence in London, and fairly to commence the study of the law; which he was now enabled to do through the true friendship of Mr. C. W. W. Wynn, from whom he received for some years from this time an annuity of 160*l.*, — the prompt fulfilment of a promise made during their years of college intimacy. This was indeed one of those acts of rare friendship, — twice honourable, — "to him that gives and him that takes it;" bestowed with pleasure, received without any painful feelings, and often reverted to, as the staff and stay of those years, when otherwise he must have felt to the full, all the manifold evils of being, as he himself expressed it, "cut adrift upon the ocean of life."

How reluctantly he had looked forward to his legal studies, his past letters have shown; nor did the prospect appear more pleasing when the anticipation was about to be changed to the reality.

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Jan. 1. 1797

"So, Bedford, begins the year that will terminate our correspondence. I mean to spend one summer in North Wales, studying the country for Madoc, and do not intend writing to you then, because you shall be with me. And for all the rest of the days I look on to clearly, the view is bounded by the smoke of London. Methinks, like Camoens, I could dub it Babylon, and write lamentations for the 'Sion' of my birth-place, having, like him, no reason to regret the past, except that it is not the present; it is the country I want. A field thistle is to me worth all the flowers of Covent Garden.

"However, Bedford, happiness is a flower that will blossom anywhere; and I expect to be happy, even in London. You know who is to watch at my gate; and if he will let in any of your club, well and good.

"Time and experience seem to have assimilated us: we think equally ill of mankind, and from the complexion of your last letters, I believe you think as badly as I do of their rulers. I fancy you are mounted above the freezing point of aristocracy, to the temperate degree where I have fallen. . . . Methinks, Grosvenor, the last two years have made me the

elder; but you know I never allow the aristocracy of years.

"I have this day finished my Letters, and now my time is my own,—my 'race is run;' and perhaps the next book of mine which makes its appearance will be my 'posthumous works!' . . . . I must be on the Surrey side of the water; this will suit me and please you. I am familiar with the *names* of your club,—shall I ever be so with themselves? Naturally of a reserved disposition, there was a considerable period of my life in which high spirits, quick feelings, and principles enthusiastically imbibed, made me talkative;—experience has taught me wisdom, and I am again as silent, as *self-centering* as in early youth.

"After the nine hours' law study, I shall have a precious fragment of the day at my own disposal; now, Grosvenor, I must be a miser of time, for I am just as sleepy a fellow as you remember me at Brixton. You see I am not collected enough to write,—this plaguy cough interrupts me, and shakes all the ideas in my brain out of their places.

"Jan. 7.

"A long interval, Grosvenor, and it has not been employed agreeably. I have been taken ill at Bristol. . . . I was afraid of a fever. . . . a giddiness of head, which accompanied the seizure, rendered me utterly unfit for anything. I was well nurst, and am well. . . . When I get to London I have some comfortable plans; but much depends on the likeability of your new friends: you say you have en-

gaged some of them to meet me: now if you taught them to expect anything in me, they must owe their disappointment to you. Remember that I am as reserved to others as I am open to you. You have seen a hedgehog roll himself up when noticed, even so do I shelter myself in my own thoughts. . . .

"I have sketched out a tragedy on the martyrdom of Joan of Arc, which is capable of making a good closet drama. My ideas of tragedy differ from those generally followed; there is seldom *nature* enough in the dialogue. Even Shakespeare gets upon the stilts sometimes; the dramatist ought rather to display a knowledge of the workings of the human heart than his own imagination; high strained metaphor can rarely be introduced with propriety — similes never. — Do you think I shall strip tragedy of all its ornaments? this, time must discover. Yet look on the dramatic parts of Joan of Arc; they are the best; — the dialogue is impassioned, but it is natural. John Doe and Richard Roe must, however, form the chief personages in the last act of my life. Grosvenor, will it be a tragedy or a comedy? However, I will not now think of the catastrophe, but rather look on to the pleasant scenes when we shall meet. Fare you well. . . .

Yours affectionately,
R. S."

In the course of the next month (February), my father went up to town for the purpose of fixing himself in some convenient situation for his legal studies. "Now, my dear Edith," he writes from

there, "am I of Gray's Inn; where I this day paid twelve pounds fifteen shillings for admission.* . . . Edith, you must come to me. I am not merely uncomfortable, I am unhappy without you. I rise in the morning without expecting pleasure from the day, and I lie down at night without one wish for the morning. This town presents to me only a wilderness. . . . I am just returned from ——; they can receive us for 40*l.* a year: —two rooms, they are not large, but they are handsomely furnished, and there is a good book-case, and every thing looks clean. . . . Direct to me at Mr. Peacocks, No. 20, Prospect Place, Newington Butts, near London; but, my dear Edith, there is 'no prospect' in this vile neighbourhood.". . . . And again, a few days later, he writes in that playful and affectionate strain in which all his letters to my mother are couched, — "Grosvenor has just been talking of you. He was correcting an error in Musæus; I had laid down my pen and begun one of my melodious whistles, upon which he cried for mercy for God's sake, and asked if you liked my whistling; adding that he would spirit you up to rebellion if ever I did any thing you did not like. I said you had often threatened to tell Grosvenor Bedford. Well, Edith, on the fifth day I shall see you once more; and you do not know with what comfort I think at night, that one day more is gone. I do not misemploy the leisure I make here; such books as, from their value, ought not to be lent from the library, I am now consulting, and appro-

* This letter is without date, but the receipt for these entrance fees, which I have before me, fixes the time, February 7. 1797.

priating such of their contents as may be useful, to my red book.

". . . . Richards, I understand, was much pleased with me on Sunday. I was, as always in the company of strangers, thoughtful, reserved, and almost silent. God never intended that I should *make myself agreeable* to anybody. I am glad he likes me, however, — he can and will assist me in this ugly world." *

The following letters will show the course of his London life during the few months he resided there at this time.

To Joseph Cottle, Esq.

"London, Feb. 1797.

" My dear Friend,

" I am now entered on a new way of life, which will lead me to independence. You know that I neither lightly undertake any scheme, nor lightly abandon what I have undertaken. I am happy because I have no wants, and because the independence I labour to obtain, and of attaining which my expectations can hardly be disappointed, will leave me nothing to wish. I am indebted to you, Cottle, for the comforts of my latter time. In my present situation I feel a pleasure in saying thus much.

" As to my literary pursuits, after some consideration I have resolved to postpone every other till I have concluded Madoc. This must be the greatest

* Feb. 16. 1797.

of all my works. The structure is complete in my mind; and my mind is likewise stored with appropriate images. Should I delay it these images may become fainter, and perhaps age does not improve the poet.

"Thank God! Edith comes on Monday next. I say thank God! for I have never, since my return, been absent from her so long before, and sincerely hope and intend never to be so again. On Tuesday we shall be settled; and on Wednesday my legal studies begin in the morning, and I shall begin with Madoc in the evening. Of this it is needless to caution you to say nothing, as I must have the character of a lawyer; and, though I can and will unite the two pursuits, no one would credit the possibility of the union. In two years the poem shall be finished, and the many years it must lie by will afford ample time for correction. Mary* has been in the Oracle; also some of my sonnets in the Telegraph, with outrageous commendation. I have declined being a member of a Literary Club which meets weekly, and of which I had been elected a member. Surely a man does not do his duty who leaves his wife to evenings of solitude, and I feel duty and happiness to be inseparable. I am happier at home than any other society can possibly make me. . . .

God bless you!

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

* His ballad of Mary the Maid of the Inn.

To Joseph Cottle, Esq.

"London, March 13. 1797.

. . . . . .

"Perhaps you will be surprised to hear that, of all the lions or *literati* that I have seen here there is not one whose countenance has not some unpleasant trait. Mary Imlay's* is the best, infinitely the best: the only fault in it is an expression somewhat similar to what the prints of Horne Tooke display — an expression indicating superiority; not haughtiness, not sarcasm in Mary Imlay, but still it is unpleasant. Her eyes are light brown, and, though the lid of one of them is affected by a little paralysis, they are the most meaning I ever saw. . . .

"When I was with George Dyer one morning last week, Mary Hayes and Miss Christal entered, and the ceremony of introduction followed. Mary Hayes writes in the 'Monthly Magazine' under the signature of M. H., and sometimes writes nonsense there about *Helvetius*. She has lately published a novel — 'Emma Courtenay'; a book much praised and much abused. I have not seen it myself, but the severe censures passed on it by persons of narrow mind have made me curious, and convinced me that it is at least an uncommon book. Mary Hayes is an agreeable woman, and a Godwinite. Now, if you will read Godwin's book with attention, we will consider between us in what light to consider that sectarian title. As for Godwin himself he has large

* The daughter of Mary Wol'stonecroft.

noble eyes, and a *nose* — oh, most abominable nose! Language is not vituperatious enough to describe the effect of its downward elongation.* He loves London, literary society, and talks nonsense about the collision of mind; and Mary Hayes echoes him. But Miss Christal, — have you seen her poems? — a fine, artless, sensible girl! Now, Cottle, that word sensible must not be construed here in its dictionary acceptation. Ask a Frenchman what it means, and he will understand it, though, perhaps, he can by no circumlocution explain its French meaning. Her heart is alive, she loves poetry, she loves retirement, she loves the country: her verses are very incorrect, and the literary circles say she has no genius; but she has genius, Joseph Cottle, or there is no truth in physiognomy. Gilbert Wakefield came in while I was disputing with Mary Hayes upon the moral effects of towns. He has a most critic-like voice, as if he had snarled himself hoarse. You see I like the women better than the men. Indeed, they are better animals in general, perhaps because more is left to nature in their education. Nature is very good, but God knows there is very little of it left.

"I wish you were within a morning's walk, but I am always persecuted by time and space. Robert

* Godwin's nose came in for no small share of condemnation. In another letter he says — "We dine with Mary Wollstonecroft (now Godwin) to-morrow. Oh, he has a foul nose, and I never see it without longing to cut it off. By the bye, Dr. —— told me that I had exactly Lavater's nose; to my no small satisfaction, for I did not know what to make of that protuberance or promontory of mine. I could not compliment him. He has a very red, drinking face; and little good-humoured eyes, like cunning and short-sightedness united." — *To Joseph Cottle*, May, 1797.

Southey and Law and Poetry make up an odd kind of triunion. We jog on easily together, and I advance with sufficient rapidity in *Blackstone* and *Madoc*. I hope to finish my poem and to begin my practice in about two years. God bless you!

Yours affectionately,

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To Thomas Southey.

"March 31. 1797.

"I have stolen time to write to you, though uncertain whether you may still be at Plymouth; but, if the letter should have to follow you, well and good; if lost, it matters little. I have a bookseller's job on my hands; it is to translate a volume from the French — about a month's work*; and the pay will be not less than five-and-twenty guineas, an employment more profitable than pleasant; but I should like plenty such. Three or four such jobs would furnish me a house. . . . . Your description of the Spanish coast about St. Sebastian has very highly delighted me. I intend to versify it, put the lines in Madoc, and give your account below in the note. To me, who had never seen any other but the tame shores of this island, the giant rocks of Galicia ap-

* The work was tolerably hard. "I am running a race with the printers again," he writes to Mr. Cottle, April 5., "translating a work from the French (Necker on the Revolution, vol. ii., — Dr. Aiken and his son translate the first vol.). My time is now wholly engrossed by the race, for I run at the rate of sixteen pages a day, as hard going as sixteen miles for a hack horse."

peared stupendously sublime. They even derived a grandeur from their barrenness: it gives them a majestic simplicity that fills the undistracted mind. I have in contemplation another work upon my journey, — a series of poems, the subjects occasioned by the scenes I passed, and the meditations which those scenes excited. Do you perceive the range this plan includes? History, imagination, philosophy, all would be pressed into my service. . . . A noble design! and it has met with some encouragement. But time is scarce, and I must be a lawyer — a sort of animal that might be made of worse materials than those with which nature tempered my clay.

. . . . . .

Should I publish the series of poems I mentioned, it is my intention to annex prints from the sketches my uncle took upon our road. I sometimes regret that, after leaving the College Green, I have never had encouragement to go on with drawing. The evening when Shad and I were so employed, was then the pleasantest part of the day, and I began at last to know something about it. I would gladly get those drawings, but my aunt never lets any thing go; and the greater part of my books, and all those drawings, and my coins; with a number of things, of little intrinsic value, but which I should highly prize, are all locked up in the Green.

"The poor old theatre* is going to ruin, for which I have worked so many hours, and which so deeply interested me once. Such are the revolutions of private life, and such strange alterations do a few years produce!"

* See p. 131.

"My aunt told Peggy* it was pretty well in me to write a book about Portugal who had not been there six months: for her part, she had been there twelve months, and yet she could not write a book about it — so apt are we to measure knowledge by time. I employed my time there in constant attention, seeing everything and asking questions, — and never went to bed without writing down the information I had acquired during the day. I am now tolerably versed in Spanish and Portuguese poetry, and am writing a series of essays upon the subject in the 'Monthly Magazine' — a work which, probably, you do not see.

"Farewell! I hope you may soon come to Portsmouth, that we may see you.

Yours affectionately,

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To Thomas Southey.

"April 28. 1797.

"My dear Thomas,

"I have been regretting that you were not at Portsmouth in the great insurrection†, that I might have had a full, true, and particular account of that extraordinary business — a business at which every body is astonished. . . . . As I have no business in London (except, indeed, to dine at Gray's Inn once at the latter end of June,) till November, we intend

* His cousin, Margaret Hill.

† The mutiny of the fleet at Spithead.

spending the summer and autumn somewhere by the sea: where is not yet determined, but most probably somewhere in Hampshire. . . . . London is a place for which I entertain a most hearty hatred; and Edith likes it as little as myself; and as for the sea, I like it very much when on shore.

"I had a letter from Lisbon yesterday. My uncle's family has been very unfortunate: his poor old woman is dead, and so is his dog Linda. His mare, who was lame, he had given away to be turned into the woods; she has not been seen lately, and he thinks the wolves have eat her; it was an account that made me melancholy. I had been long enough an inhabitant of his house to become attached to every thing connected with it; and poor old Ursula was an excellent woman: he will never find her equal, and I shall never think of Lisbon again without some feelings of regret. . . . .

"My acquaintance here are more than are convenient, and I meet with invitations unpleasant to refuse, and still more unpleasant to accept. This is another motive to me to wish for a country residence as long as possible. I find the distance in this foul city very inconvenient; 'tis a morning's walk to call upon a distant friend, and I return from it thoroughly fatigued. We are going to dine on Wednesday next with Mary Wollstonecroft—of all the literary characters the one I most admire. My curiosity is fully satisfied, and the greater part of these people, after that is satisfied, leave no other remaining. This is not the case with her; she is a first-rate woman,

sensible of her own worth, but without arrogance or affectation.

"I have two reasons for preferring a residence near the sea. I love to pickle myself in that grand brine tub; and I wish to catch its morning, evening, and mid-day appearance for poetry, with the effect of every change of weather. Fancy will do much; but the poet ought to be an accurate observer of nature; and I shall watch the clouds, and the rising and setting sun, and the sea birds with no inattentive eye. I have remedied one of my deficiencies, too, since a boy, and learnt to swim enough to like the exercise. This I began at Oxford, and practised a good deal in the summer of 1795. My last dip was in the Atlantic Ocean, at the foot of the Arrabida Mountain — a glorious spot. I have no idea of sublimity exceeding it. . . . . Have you ever met with Mary Wollstonecroft's letters from Sweden and Norway? She has made me in love with a cold climate, and frost and snow, with a northern moonlight. Now I am turned lawyer, I shall have no more books to send you, except, indeed, second editions, when they are called for, and then my alterations will be enough, perhaps, to give one interested in the author some pleasure in the comparison. God bless you.

Yours affectionately,

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

As the spring advanced, my father began to pine more and more for country air, and conceiving that his legal studies could be as well pursued by the sea

side as in the smoke of London, went down into Hampshire to look for some place to settle in for the summer months. Southampton was their first halting-place, and from thence he writes to Mr. Bedford, complaining of their ill success.

"In every village of the Susquehannah Indians* there is a vacant dwelling, called *the strangers' house.* When a traveller there arrives at one of these villages, he stops and hollas; two of the elders of the tribe immediately go out to meet him; they lead him to this house, and then go round to tell the inhabitants that a stranger is arrived fatigued and hungry.

"They do not order these things quite so well in England. We arrived at Southampton at six last evening. 'Lodgings' were hung out at almost every house, but some would not let less than eleven rooms, some seven, and so on, and we walked a very long and uncomfortable hour before we could buy hospitality, and that at a very dear rate. I mean to walk to-morrow through Lyndhurst and Lymington

"Here with Cadwallon and a chosen band,
I left the ships. Lincoya guided us
A toilsome way among the heights; at dusk
We reach'd the village skirts; he bade us halt,
And raised his voice; the elders of the land
Came forth, and led us to an ample hut,
Which in the centre of their dwellings stood,
The Strangers' House. They eyed us wondering,
Yet not for wonder ceased they to observe
Their hospitable rites; from hut to hut
The tidings ran that strangers were arrived,
Fatigued and hungry and athirst; anon
Each from his means supplying us, came food
And beverage such as cheer the weary man.

Madoc, Book VI.

to Christ Church,—that is, if Edith be better, for she is now very unwell. I hope and believe it is only the temporary effect of fatigue; but, Grosvenor, a single man does not know what anxiety is.

"Edith is not well enough to walk out. I therefore have seen only enough of this place to dislike it. . . . . I want a quiet lonely place, in sight of something green. Surely in a walk of thirty miles this may be found; but if I find the whole coast infected by visitors, I will go to Bristol, where I shall have the printer on the one side, Charles Danvers on the other, Cottle in front, the woods and rocks of Avon behind, and be in the centre of all good things.

"Our journey was hot and dusty, but through a lovely country. At one time the coach was full, and all but me asleep. Something fell off the roof, and I had the unutterable pleasure of waking all of them by bellowing out for the coachman to stop. . . . . Would we were settled, aye, and for life, in some little sequestered valley! I would be content never to climb over the hills that sheltered me, and never to hear music or taste beverage but from the stream that ran beside my door. Let me have the sea, too, and now and then some pieces of a wreck to supply me with firewood, and remind me of commerce. This New Forest is very lovely; I should like to have a house in it, and dispeople the rest, like William the Conqueror. Of all land objects a forest is the finest. Gisborne has written a feeble poem on the subject. The feelings that fill me when I lie under one tree and contemplate another in all the majesty of years, are neither to be defined nor expressed, and their inde-

finable and inexpressible feelings are those of the highest delight. They pass over the mind like the clouds of the summer evening — too fine and too fleeting for memory to detain.

"And now, Grosvenor, would I wager sixpence that you are regretting my absence, because you feel inclined to come to tea with us. I could upbraid you*; but this is one of the follies of man, and I have my share of it, though, thank God, but a small share. What we can do at any time is most likely not to be done at all. We are more willing to make an effort. Is this because we feel uneasy at the prospect of labour and something to be done? and we are stimulated to industry by a love of indolence. I am a self-observer, and indeed this appears to me the secret spring.† God bless you.

R. SOUTHEY."

Having succeeded in finding lodgings at Burton, near Christ Church, my father and mother settled themselves there for the summer months, which passed very happily. Here his mother joined them from Bath, and his brother Thomas, then a midshipman on board the Phœbe frigate, who, having lately been taken by the French, had just been released from a short imprisonment at Brest. They had also

* The two friends seem to have had less intercourse when both were in London than they had anticipated. I find a not uncommon reason hinted at. Mr. Bedford had been unsuccessful in some attachment; and the sight of domestic happiness, just at that time, brought back painful thoughts.

† May 25. 1797.

at this time a young friend domesticated with them. Mr. Charles Lloyd, son of a banker at Birmingham, who had been living for some time with Mr. Coleridge at Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, and who subsequently became known as an author, and coming to reside in Westmoreland, was classed among the lake poets. Here also Mr. Cottle visited them, and here my father first became acquainted with Mr. Rickman (late one of the Clerks of the House of Commons), who will hereafter appear as one of his most constant correspondents and most valued friends.

The surrounding country seems to have afforded him great pleasure, keenly alive as he ever was to all natural beauties, and just at this time doubly inclined to enjoy them, coming from the 'no prospect' of Prospect Place, Newington Butts. The sea he delighted in; the New Forest was near at hand, and "a congregation of rivers, the clearest you ever saw." The only drawbacks were his detested legal studies, and the idea of returning to London.

A few of his letters will fill up the present year. The first of these is addressed to Mr. May, whom he had met during his visit to Lisbon, and with whom he had already formed a friendship, as close as it was destined to be lasting. Mr. May, it seems, had promised to lend him the Pucelle of Chapelain.

To John May, Esq.

"Burton, June 26. 1797

"Neither the best friends or the bitterest enemies of Chapelain could have felt more curiosity than I do

to see his poem: good it cannot be, for though the habit of writing satire, as, indeed, the indulgence of any kind of wit, insensibly influences the moral character, and disposes it to sacrifice anything to a good point; yet Boileau must have had some reason for the extreme contempt in which he held this unfortunate production. I am inclined to think it better, however, than it has always been represented. Chapelain stood high in poetical reputation when he published this, the work on which he meant to build his fame. He is said to have written good odes; certainly, then, his epic labours cannot be wholly void of merit; and for its characteristic fault, extreme harshness, it is very probable that a man of genius writing in so unmanly a language should become harsh by attempting to be strong. The French never can have a good epic poem till they have republicanised their language. It appears to me a thing impossible in their metre; and for the prose of Fénélon, Florian, and Betaube, I find it peculiarly unpleasant. I have sometimes read the works of Florian aloud: his stories are very interesting and well conducted; but in reading them I have felt obliged to simplify as I read, and omit most of the similes and apostrophes; they disgusted me, and I felt ashamed to pronounce them. Ossian is the only book bearable in this style; there is a melancholy obscurity in the history of Ossian, and of almost all his heroes, that must please. Ninety-nine readers in a hundred cannot understand Ossian, and therefore they like the book. I read it always with renewed pleasure.

"Have you read Madame Roland's Appel a l'im-

partiale Posterité? It is one of those books that make me love individuals, and yet dread, detest, and despise mankind in a mass. There was a time when I believed in the persuadibility of man, and had the mania of man-mending. Experience has taught me better. After a certain age the organs of voice cannot accommodate themselves to the utterance of a foreign pronunciation; so it is with the mind, it grows stiff and unyielding, like our sinews, as we grow older. The ablest physician can do little in the great lazar house of society; it is a pest-house that infects all within its atmosphere He acts the wisest part who retires from the contagion; nor is that part either a selfish or a cowardly one; it is ascending the ark, like Noah, to preserve a remnant which may become the whole. As to what is the cause, of the incalculable wretchedness of society, and what is the panacea, I have long felt certified in my own mind. The rich are strangely ignorant of the miseries to which the lower and largest part of mankind are abandoned. . . . . The savage and civilised states are alike unnatural, alike unworthy of the origin and end of man. Hence the prevalence of scepticism and atheism, which, from being the effect, becomes the cause of vice. . . . .

"I have lived much among the friends of Priestley, and learnt from them many peculiar opinions of that man, who speaks all he thinks. No man has studied Christianity more, or believes it more sincerely; he thinks it not improbable that *another revelation* may be granted us, for the obstinacy and wickedness of mankind call for no less a remedy. The necessity of another revelation I do not see myself. What we

have, read with the right use of our own reasoning faculties, appears to me sufficient; but in a Millenarian this opinion is not ridiculous, and the many yet unfulfilled prophecies give it an appearance of probability. . . . .

"The slave trade has much disheartened me. That their traffic is supported by the consumption of sugar is demonstrable: I have demonstrated it to above fifty persons with temporary success; and not three of those persons have persevered in rejecting it. This is perfectly astonishing to me; and what can be expected from those, who will not remedy so horrible an iniquity, by so easy an exertion? The future presents a dreary prospect; but all will end in good, and I can contemplate it calmly without suffering it to cloud the present. I may not live to do good to mankind personally; but I will at least leave something behind me to strengthen those feelings and excite those reflections in others, from whence virtue must spring. In writing poetry with this end, I hope I am not uselessly employing my leisure hours. God bless you. . . . .

Affectionately yours,
ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To John May, Esq.

"Burton, July 11. 1797.

"I thank you for Chapelain: I read his poem with the hope of finding something good, and would gladly have reversed the sentence of condemnation which I must, in common honesty, confirm; it is very bad indeed, and can please only by its absurdity. . . . .

"I thank you also for your good opinion of me: I would fain be thought well of by the 'ten righteous men,' and communicate frequently with you as one of them. . . . . I suffer no gloomy presages to disturb the tranquil happiness with which God has blest me now, and which I know how to value, because I have felt what it is to want everything, except the pride of a well satisfied conscience.

"The sister and niece of Chatterton are now wholly destitute: on this occasion I appear as editor of all his works for their relief; this is an heinous sin against the world's opinion, for a young lawyer, but it would have been a real crime to have refused it. We have a black scene to lay before the public: these poor women have been left in want, while a set of scoundrels have been reaping hundreds from the writings of Chatterton. I hope now to make the catastrophe to the history of the poor boy of Bristol; you shall see the proposals as soon as they are printed. Cottle has been with me a few days, and we have arranged everything relative to this business; he is the publisher, and means to get the paper at prime cost, and not receive the usual profit from what he sells. The accounts will be published, and we hope and expect to place Mrs. Newton in comfort during the last years of her life.

"Cottle brought with him the new edition of Coleridge's poems: they are dedicated to his brother George in one of the most beautiful poems I ever read. . . . It contains all the poems of Lloyd and Lamb, and I know no volume that can be compared to it. You know not how infinitely my happiness is

increased by residing in the country. I have not a wish beyond the quietness I enjoy; everything is tranquil and beautiful; but sometimes I look forward with regret to the time when I must return to a city which I so heartily dislike. . . .

"God bless you!

Yours affectionately,

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To John May, Esq.

"July 15. 1799.

"My dear Friend,

"I sincerely thank you for your letter. . . . . I am inclined to think, when my uncle blamed me for not doing my utmost to relieve my family, he must have alluded to my repeated refusal of entering orders; a step which undoubtedly would almost instantly have relieved them, and which occasioned me great anguish and many conflicts of mind. To this I have been urged by him, and by my mother; but you know what my religious opinions are, and I need not ask whether I did rightly and honestly in refusing. Till Christmas last, I supported myself wholly by the profits of my writings. . . . . Thus you may see that the only means I have ever possessed of assisting my mother, was by entering the church. God knows I would exchange every intellectual gift which he has blessed me with, for implicit faith to have been able to do this. . . . I care not for the opinion of the world, but I would willingly be thought justly of by a few individuals. I labour at a study which I very

much dislike, to render myself independent, and I work for the bookseller whenever I can get employment, that I may have to spare for others. . . . . I now do all I can, perhaps I may some day be enabled to do all I wish; however, there is One who will accept the will for the deed. God bless you!

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

The next letter refers to a proposal of Mr. Bedford's, that, when my father and mother came again to reside in London, they should occupy the same house with him.

"August 2. 1797

"My dear Grosvenor,

"I like the plan you propose, and see no objection to it at present, but you know how feasible those things appear which we wish. One circumstance only may happen to prevent it. I have some hopes that my mother will come and live with me. This I very earnestly wish, and shall use every means to induce her, but it does not appear so probable as I could desire. This I shall know in a short time; and if then you have not changed your intentions, you know how gladly I should domesticate under the same roof with you. . . . .

"I think you would derive more good from Epictetus, than from studying yourself. There is a very proud independence in the Stoic Philosophy, which has always much pleased me. You would find certain sentences in the Enchiridion, which would occur to the mind when such maxims were wanted, and operate as motives: besides, when you are ex-

amining yourself, you ought to have a certain standard whereby to measure yourself; and however far an old stoic may be from perfection, he is almost a god when compared to the present race, who libel that nature which appeared with such exceeding lustre at Athens, at Lacedæmon, and in Rome. I could send you to a better system than that of the bondsman Epictetus, where you would find a better model on which to form your conduct. But the mind should have arrived at a certain stage to profit properly by that book which few have attained; — it should be cool and confirmed. . . . . God bless you!

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Bath, Sept. 22. 1797.

"Me voici then at Bath! And why had you not your birthday poem? In plain downright sincere sincerity, I totally forgot it, till on the morning of the 11th of September, when I found myself on Poole Heath, walking through desolation*, with that gloomy capability which my nativity-caster marks as among the prominent features of my character. We left Burton yesterday morning: the place was very quiet and I was very comfortable, nor know I when to expect again so pleasant a summer. We live in odd times, Grosvenor; and even in the best periods of this bad society, the straightest path is most cursedly crooked.

"I shall be with you in November; send me my Coke, I pray you. I want law food, and though not over hungry, yet must I eat and execrate like Pistol.

* See antè, p. 23.

. . . . Something odd came into my head a few hours since. I was feeling that the love of letter writing had greatly gone from me, and, enquiring why; my mind is no longer agitated by hopes and fears, no longer doubtful, no longer possessed with such ardent enthusiasm: it is quiet, and repels all feelings that would disturb that state. When I write I have nothing to communicate, for you know all my opinions and feelings; and no incidents can occur to one settled as I am. . . .

Yours sincerely,

"R. S."

"Bath, Nov. 19. 1797.

"Grosvenor, I have found out a better fence for our Utopia than Carlisle's plantation of vipers and rattlesnakes, it is,—to surround it with a vacuum; for you know, Grosvenor, this would so puzzle the philosophers on the other side; and we might see them making experiments on the atmosphere, to the great annoyance of dogs, whom they would scientifically torture. Besides, if we had any refractory inmate, we might push him into the void.

". . . . I hate the journey; and yet going to London I may say with Quarles,

"'My journey's better than my journey's end.'

A little home, Grosvenor, near the sea, or in any quiet country where there is water to bathe in, and what should I wish for in this life? and how could I be so honourably or so happily employed as in writing?

"If Buonaparte should come before I look like

Sir John Comyns! Oh that fine chuckle head was made for the law! I am too old to have my skull moulded.

"....Why not trust the settled quietness to which my mind has arrived? It is wisdom to avoid all violent emotions. I would not annihilate my feelings, but I would have them under a most Spartan despotism. Grosvenor, Inveni portum, spes et fortuna valete.

"'Tu quoque, si vis
Lumine claro
Cernere rectum,
Gaudia pelle,
Pelle timorem,
Spemque fugato,
Nec dolor adsit.'

I have laid up the advice of Boëthius in my heart, and prescribe it to you, — so fare you well.

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

The beautiful and affecting lines contained in the next letter would have found a fitting place in Mr. Justice Talfourd's "Final Memorials" of Charles Lamb, where all the circumstances of this domestic tragedy are detailed. I may here add that they would have been sent to him, had they come into my hands prior to the publication of those most interesting volumes.

To C. W. W. Wynn, Esq.

"Bath, Nov. 20. 1797.

"My dear Wynn,

"....You will be surprised perhaps at hearing that Cowper's poem does not at all please me: you

must have taken it up in some moment when your mind was predisposed to be pleased, and the first impression has remained; indeed I think it not above mediocrity. I cannot trace the author of the 'Task' in one line. I know that our tastes differ much in poetry, and yet I think you must like these lines by Charles Lamb. I believe you know his history, and the dreadful death of his mother.—

"'Thou should'st have longer lived, and to the grave
Have peacefully gone down in full old age;
Thy children would have tended thy gray hairs.
We might have sat, as we have often done,
By our fire-side, and talk'd whole nights away,
Old time, old friends, and old events recalling,
With many a circumstance of trivial note,
To memory dear, and of importance grown.
How shall we tell them in a stranger's ear!

"'A wayward son oft times was I to thee:
And yet, in all our little bickerings,
Domestic jars, there was I know not what
Of tender feeling that were ill exchanged
For this world's chilling friendships, and their smiles
Familiar whom the heart calls strangers still.

"'A heavy lot hath he, most wretched man,
Who lives the last of all his family!
He looks around him, and his eye discerns
The face of the stranger; and his heart is sick.
Man of the world, what can'st thou do for him?
Wealth is a burthen which he could not bear;
Mirth a strange crime, the which he dares not act;
And generous wines no cordial to his soul.
For wounds like his, Christ is the only cure.
Go, preach thou to him of a world to come,
Where friends shall meet and know each other's face;
Say less than this, and say it to the winds.'

"I am aware of the danger of studying simplicity of language — but you will find in my blank verse a fulness of phrase when the subject requires it; these lines may instance: —

"'It was a goodly sight
To see the embattled pomp, as with the step
Of stateliness the barbed steeds came on;
To see the pennons rolling their long waves
Before the gale; and banners broad and bright
Tossing their blazonry; and high-plumed chiefs,
Vidames, and Seneschals, and Chastellains,
Gay with their bucklers' gorgeous heraldry,
And silken surcoats on the buoyant wind
Billowing.'

God bless you!

Yours affectionately,
R. SOUTHEY."

A few days after the date of this letter, my father and mother again took up their abode in London; but the plan of occupying lodgings conjointly with Mr. Bedford was not accomplished, chiefly on account of Charles Lloyd being still with them. From thence he writes to his brother Thomas.

To Thomas Southey.

"London, Dec. 24. 1797.

"My dear Tom,

". . . . I have also another motive for wishing to live out of the town, to avoid the swarms of acquaintances who buzz about me and sadly waste my time,—an article I can but little afford to throw away. I have my law, which will soon occupy me from ten in the morning till eight in an office, excepting the dinner-time. My Joan of Arc * takes

* He was at present engaged in revising Joan of Arc for a second edition, in which all that part which had been written by Mr. Coleridge was omitted.

up more time than you would suppose, for I have had a mine of riches laid open to me in a library belonging to the Dissenters, and have been disturbing the spiders; add to this that I write now for the 'Critical Review,' and you will see that I cannot afford to keep levee days. . . . . I keep a large copy of my poems for you. They have sold uncommonly well; 1000 were printed, and I hear 750 are already gone. The Joan of Arc is scandalously delayed at Bristol. I have had only five proofs in all, and this delay, as the book is wanted, is a serious loss. A print of the Maid will be prefixed, solely for the sake of giving Robert Hancock some employment, and making his name known as an engraver. I have got a promise of having him introduced to Alderman Boydell, the great publisher of engravings; he is still at Bath, and I am in hopes I shall be the means of essentially serving him.

"You will be surprised to hear that I have been planning a charitable institution, which will in all probability be established. It was planned with John May and Carlisle, and the outline is simply this, — many poor victims perish after they have been healed at the hospitals, by returning to unwholesome air, scanty and bad food, cold and filth. We mean to employ them in a large garden, for many persons may be usefully employed in some manner there. When in good order, the produce of the garden will support the institution; in the long winter evenings the people will be employed in making nets, baskets, or matting; and the women in making sheeting — all things that will be wanted at

home, and for the overplus a ready sale will be had among the supporters of the Convalescent Asylum. My name will not appear in the business: I leave the credit to Lords and Esquires. I will send you our printed plan as soon as it is ready. Six hours' labour is all that will be required from the strongest persons: for extra work they will be paid; then they may leave the Asylum with some little money, and with some useful knowledge.

"We are much pleased with this scheme, as it will make every body useful whom it benefits; a man with one leg may make holes for cabbages with his wooden leg, and a fellow with one arm follow and put in the plants. . . . .

"Would you were here to-morrow! we would keep holiday: but 'tis very long since Christmas has been a festival with us. God bless you.

Yours affectionately,

R. SOUTHEY."

My father remained in London only a very short time, when, finding it extremely prejudicial both to his own health and my mother's, he determined to seek some other place of residence, and went down to Bristol with that intention. Soon afterwards he writes to his friend, Mr. Wynn, in somewhat depressed spirits.

To C. W. W. Wynn, Esq.

"Bath, Wednesday, April 4. 1798.

"My dear Wynn,

"I should have thought you would have liked the Merida Inscription. It was designed for my Letters, but on consideration the point appears more applicable to our own country, and as one martyr is as good as another, Señora Eulalia must give place to old Latimer and Ridley. Its appearance in the Oracle makes me let out what I intended not to have told you till Christmas. I then thought to have taken you into a house of my own, and shown you the chairs and tables into which I had transmuted bad verses. Immediately before I left town I agreed to furnish the Morning Post with occasional verses, without a signature.* My end in view was to settle in a house as soon as possible, which this, with the Review, would enable me at Christmas to do. I told no person whatever but Edith. I signed the Inscription because I meant to insert it in my letters. Of all the rest Lord William is the only piece that bears the mark of the beast. I did not tell you, because you would not like it now, and it would have amused you at Christmas: Lord William's is certainly a good story, and will, when corrected, make the best of my Ballads. I am glad you like it. There is one other, which if you have not seen I will send you; it is ludicrous, in the Alonzo metre, called the 'Ring,'†—a true story; and, like the 'Humorous

* For this he was to receive a guinea a week. A similar offer was made about this time by the editor of the Morning Chronicle to Burns, and refused.

† This ballad is called "King Charlemagne" in the later editions of his poems.

Lieutenant,'* it is not good for much, and yet one or two stanzas may amuse you.

"I write this from Bath, where I was summoned in consequence of my mother's state of health. She is very ill; and I hope to remove her to Lisbon speedily, — the climate would, I am certain, restore her, though I fear nothing else can.

"You call me lazy for not writing; is it not the same with you? Do you feel the same inclination for filling a folio sheet now, as when in '90 and '91 we wrote to each other so fully and so frequently? The inclination is gone from me. I have nothing to communicate — no new feelings — no new opinions. We move no longer in the same circles, and no longer see things in the same point of view. I never now write a long letter to those who think with me, — it is useless to express what they also feel; and as for reasoning with those who differ from me, I have never seen any good result from argument. I write not in the best of spirits; my mother's state of health depresses me, — the more so as I have to make her cheerful. Edith is likewise very unwell; indeed so declining as to make me somewhat apprehensive for the future. A few months will determine all these uncertainties, — and perhaps change my views in life — or rather destroy them. This is the first time that I have expressed the feelings that often will rise. Take no notice of them when you write.

"God bless you. If nothing intervene I shall see you in May. I wish indeed that month were over.

* This was probably one of his early poems, which was never republished.

Few men have ever more subdued their feelings than myself, — and yet I have more left than are consistent with happiness.

"Once more, God bless you.

Yours affectionately,
ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To C. W. W. Wynn, Esq.

"Bristol, May 5. 1798.

"My dear Wynn,

". . . . You have seen my brother in the Gazette I suppose; mentioned honourably, and in the wounded list. His wounds are slight, but his escape has been wonderful. The boatswain came to know if they should board the enemy forwards, and was told, by all means. Tom took a pike, and ran forwards. He found them in great confusion, and, as he thought, only wanting a leader; he asked if they would follow him, and one poor fellow answered 'Aye.' On this Tom got into the French ship, followed, as he thought, by the rest, but, in fact, only by this man. Just as he had made good his footing, he received two thrusts with a pike in his right thigh, and fell. They made a third thrust as he fell, which glanced from his shoulder-blade, and took a small piece of flesh out of his back. He fell between the two ships, and this saved his life, for he caught a rope, and regained the deck of the Mars.* . . . .

I do not know whether it would be prudent in Tom to accompany Lord Proby to Lisbon, as Lord Brid-

* This was in the engagement between the Mars and L'Hercule.

port has sent him word that he would not forget him when he has served his time, and offered him a berth on board his own ship. He will use his own judgment, and probably, I think, follow the fortunes of Butterfield, the first lieutenant. When I saw him so noticed by Butterfield, I felt, as he says of himself during the engagement, 'something that I never felt before.' I felt more proud of my brother when he received ten pounds prize-money and sent his mother half: and yet it gave me something like exultation that he would now be respected by his acquaintance, though not for his best virtues. He is an excellent young man, and, moreover, a good seaman. God bless him, and you also.

Yours affectionately,

R. SOUTHEY."

Among my father's college friends, and as forming one of the enthusiastic party who were to have formed a "model republic" on the banks of the Susquehannah, has been mentioned George Burnett, who, of all the number, suffered most permanently from having taken up those visionary views. He had intended to enter the Church of England, and, had he not been tempted to quit the beaten track, would probably have become a steady, conscientious, and useful clergyman. Carried away by the influence chiefly of my father and Mr. Coleridge, he imbibed first their political and then their religious opinions; and thus, being led to abandon the intention with which he had entered Oxford, he became so completely unsettled as to render his short life a series

of unsuccessful attempts in many professions. Much of this was, indeed, owing to the vacillating character of his mind; but it was not the less through life a subject of regret to my father, not unmixed with self-reproach.

At the present time he was minister to a Unitarian congregation at Yarmouth, whither my father now went for a short visit, having the additional motive of seeing his brother Henry, whom, some time previously, he had placed with Burnett as a private pupil. Through Burnett's means he was now introduced to William Taylor, of Norwich, with whose writings he was already acquainted, and towards whom he found himself immediately and strongly drawn by the similarity of their tastes and pursuits. This meeting led to a correspondence (chiefly upon literary subjects), which has been already given to the public, and to a friendship, which would have been a very close one had there not, unhappily, been a total want of sympathy between the parties on the most important of all subjects,—William Taylor's religious opinions being of the most extravagant and rationalistic kind. This difference my father felt much in later life, as his own religious feelings deepened and strengthened, although he always entertained towards him the sincerest regard, and a great respect for his many good qualities.

The other incidents of this visit may be gathered from the following letters, the latter of which, if there is nothing particularly striking in the versification, yet affords too pleasing a picture of his mind to be omitted.

To Mrs. Southey.

"May 29. 1798.

. . . . . "I am writing from Ormsby, the dwelling-place of Mr. Manning, distant six miles from Yarmouth. We came here yesterday to dinner, and leave it to-morrow evening. I have begun some blank verse to you and laid it aside, because, if I do not tell you something about this place now, I shall not do it at all. . . . . This part of England looks as if Nature had wearied herself with adorning the rest with hill and dale, and squatted down here to rest herself. You must even suppose a very Dutch-looking Nature to have made it of such pancake flatness. An unpromising country, and yet, Edith, I could be very happy with such a home as this. I am looking through the window over green fields, as far as I can see,—no great distance; the hedges are all grubbed up in sight of the house, which produces a very good effect. A few fine acacias, whitethorns, and other trees, are scattered about; a walk goes all round, with a beautiful hedge of lilacs, laburnums, the Gueldres rose, Barbary shrubs, &c. &c. Edith, you would not wish a sweeter scene, and being here, I wish for nothing but you; half an hour's walk would reach the sea-shore.

I had almost forgot one with whom I am more intimate than any other part of the family, Rover, —a noble dog, something of the spaniel, but huge as a mastiff, and his black and brindled hair curling close, almost like a lady's wig. A very sympathising dog, I assure you, for he will not only shake

hands, but if I press his paw return the pressure. Moreover, there is excellent Nottingham ale, sent annually by Mr. Manning's son-in-law from Nottingham; what my uncle would call 'fine stuff,' such as Robin Hood and his outlaws used to drink under the greenwood tree. Robin Hood's beverage! how could I choose but like it? It is sweet and strong, — very strong, — a little made me feel this. . . . The cows in this country have no horns; this, I think, a great improvement in the breed of horned cattle, and this kind is found more productive. Another peculiarity about Yarmouth is the number of arches formed by the jawbones of a whale: they trade much with Greenland there. The old walls and old gates of the town are yet standing; the town is certainly a pleasing one. I left it, however, with pleasure, to enjoy the society of Ormsby, and I shall leave Ormsby with pleasure for the society of Norwich. In short, every movement is agreeable, because it brings me homewards.

"Thursday.

"We went yesterday in the morning to the ruins of Caister Castle, once the seat of Fastolffe, where, after wasting a great part of his fortune in the French wars, and being defeated at Patay, and disgraced in consequence of his flight, he retired to quarrel with his neighbours. The ruin is by no means fine, compared with several I have seen, but all these things produce a pleasant effect upon the mind; and besides, it is well when I am writing about the man, to have some knowledge of everything knowable respecting

him. In the evening we returned with William Taylor to Norwich; on the way we left the chaise, and crossed a moor on foot, in hopes of hearing the bittern cry. It was not till we were just quitting the moor, that one of these birds thought proper to gratify us; then he began, and presently we saw one, so that I re-entered the chaise highly satisfied. . . . .

God bless you.

Your affectionate,

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

To Mrs. Southey.

"June 4. 1798.

Edith, it ever was thy husband's wish,
Since he hath known in what is happiness,
To find some little home, some low retreat,
Where the vain uproar of the worthless world
Might never reach his ear; and where, if chance
The tidings of its horrible strifes arrived,
They would endear retirement, as the blast
Of winter makes the shelter'd traveller
Draw closer to the hearth-side, every nerve
Awake to the warm comfort. Quietness
Should be his inmate there; and he would live
To thee, and to himself, and to our God.
To dwell in that foul city, — to endure
The common, hollow, cold, lip-intercourse
Of life; to walk abroad and never see
Green field, or running brook, or setting sun!
Will it not wither up my faculties,
Like some poor myrtle that in the town air
Pines on the parlour window?

"Everywhere
Nature is lovely: on the mountain height,
Or where the embosom'd mountain-glen displays
Secure sublimity, or where around
The undulated surface gently slopes
With mingled hill and valley; — everywhere
Nature is lovely; even in scenes like these,
Where not a hillock breaks the unvaried plain,
The eye may find new charms that seeks delight.

"At eve I walk abroad; the setting sun
Hath soften'd with a calm and mellow hue
The cool fresh air; below, a bright expanse,
The waters of the *Broad* * lie luminous.
I gaze around; the unbounded plain presents
Ocean immensity, whose circling line
The bending heaven shuts in. So even here
Methinks I could be well content to fix
My sojourn; grow familiar with these scenes
Till time and memory make them dear to me;
And wish no other home.

"There have been hours
When I have long'd to mount the winged bark
And seek those better climes, where orange groves
Breathe on the evening gale voluptuous joy.
And, Edith! though I heard from thee alone
The pleasant accents of my native tongue,
And saw no wonted countenance but thine,
I could be happy in the stranger's land,
Possessing all in thee. O best beloved!
Companion, friend, and yet a dearer name!
I trod those better climes a heartless thing,
Cintra's cool rocks, and where Arrabida
Lifts from the ocean its sublimer heights,
Thine image wander'd with me, and one wish
Disturb'd the deep delight.

"Even now that wish,
Making short absence painful, still recurs.
The voice of friendship, that familiar voice,
From which in other scenes I daily heard
First greeting, poorly satisfies the heart.
And wanting thee, tho' in best intercourse,
Such as in after years remembrance oft
Will love to dwell upon; yet when the sun
Goes down, I see his setting beams with joy,
And count again the allotted days, and think
The hour will soon arrive when I shall meet
The eager greeting of affection's eye,
And hear the welcome of the voice I love.

"What have I to tell you? Can you be interested in the intercourse I have had with people whose very

* So they call the wide spread of a river in Norfolk.

names are new to you? On Sunday I went to dine with Sir Lambert Blackwell. . . . He has a very pretty house, and the finest picture I ever saw; it is St. Cecilia at the moment when the heads of her parents are brought in to terrify her into an abandonment of Christianity. I never saw a countenance so full of hope, and resignation, and purity, and holy grief; it is by Carlo Dolce. I have seen many fine pictures, but never one so perfect, so sublime, so interesting, irresistibly interesting, as this. . . .

God bless you.

Your ROBERT SOUTHEY."

Upon my father's return from this visit to Norfolk, he rejoined my mother at Bristol, and very shortly afterwards he took a small house at Westbury, a beautiful village about two miles distant from thence. Here they resided for twelve months. "This," he says in one of the prefaces to the collected edition of his poems, "was one of the happiest portions of my life.* I have never, before or since, produced so much poetry in the same space of time. The smaller pieces were communicated by letter to Charles Lamb, and had the advantage of his animadversions. I was

"To me the past presents
No object for regret;
To me the present gives
All cause for full content.
The future? It is now the cheerful noon,
And on the sunny smiling fields I gaze,
With eyes alive to joy;
When the dark night descends,
I willingly shall close my weary lids
In sure and certain hope to wake again."

Minor Poems, Westbury, 1798.

then also in habits of the most frequent and familiar intercourse with Davy, then in the flower and freshness of his youth. We were within an easy walk of each other, over some of the most beautiful ground in that beautiful part of England. When I went to the Pneumatic Institution, he had to tell me of some new experiment or discovery, and of the views which it opened for him; and when he came to Westbury, there was a fresh portion of 'Madoc' for his hearing. Davy encouraged me with his hearty approbation during its progress; and the bag of nitrous oxide with which he generally regaled me upon my visit to him, was not required for raising my spirits to the degree of settled fair, and keeping them at that elevation."

In addition to "Madoc," my father was at this time preparing for the press a second volume of his minor poems, and a second edition of his "Letters from Spain and Portugal"; and he was also engaged in editing the first volume of the "Annual Anthology," which was published in Bristol in the course of the following year. Other literary employments are mentioned in his letters, but Blackstone, and Coke upon Littleton, seem to have been almost wholly thrown aside; the study of the law was daily becoming more and more distasteful to him, and he was beginning to find, that however he might command his attention, and bring the full force of his understanding to bear upon the subject, the memory was not to be controuled by the will; and that the time and trouble so employed *not* being upon a "labour of love," was purely "labour lost."

His mother was now residing with him, and also the "Cousin Margaret" mentioned in the Autobiography.

To Thomas Southey.

"Martin Hall, Westbury; June 27. 1798.

"My dear Tom,

"Here we are, and you see have christened the house properly, I assure you, as the martins have colonized all round it, and doubly lucky must the house be on which they so build and bemire. We hesitated between the appropriate names of Rat Hall, Mouse Mansion, Vermin Villa, Cockroach Castle, Cobweb Cottage, and Spider Lodge; but, as we routed out the spiders, brushed away the cobwebs, stopped the rat holes, and found no cockroaches, we bethought us of the animals without, and dubbed it Martin Hall.

"I am sorry, Tom, you could not have seen us settled, — you would like the old house; and the view from the *drawing-room* and garden is delightful; we have turned to most notably. But once the house was an inn, or alehouse, so we have had application to sell beer, and buy a stock of tobacco-pipes. Much has been done, and much is yet to do. The rooms are large, the garden well stocked; we cut our own cabbages, live upon currant puddings, and shall soon be comfortably settled.

. . . . . .

"I wish you had been here, you might have been up to your eyes in dirt and rubbish.
We have bespoke a cat, a great carroty cat."

To H. H. Southey.

"Martin Hall, July 14. 1798.

"My dear Harry,

"I thank you for your ode of Anacreon: the Greek metre in which you have translated it, is certainly the best that could be chosen, but, perhaps, the most difficult, as the accent should flow so easily that a bad reader may not be able to spoil them. This is the case with your fourth and fifth lines: an old woman can't read them out of the proper cadence. . . . . .
I think this metre much improved to an English ear, by sometimes ending a line with a long syllable instead of a trochee. This you will see regularly done in the following translation from the Spanish of Villegas. The original metre is that of Θελω λεγειν Ατρειδας, and the verses flow as harmoniously as those of Anacreon.

"'The maidens thus address me:—
How is it, Don Esteban,
That you of love sing always,
And never sing of war?

"'I answer thus the question,
Yo bachelor* young damsels:
It is that men are ugly,
It is that you are fair.

"'For what would it avail me
To sing to drums and trumpets,
Whilst marching sorely onward,
Encumber'd by my shield?

* This is literal. The original is muchachas bachilleras — bachelor girls.

"'Think you the tree of glory
Delights the common soldier;
That tree so full of blossoms
That never bears a fruit?

"'Let him who gains in battles
His glorious wounds, enjoy them;
Let him praise war who knows not
The happiness of peace.

"'I will not sing of soldiers,
I will not sing of combats,
But only of the damsels,—
My combats are with them.'

"We are now tolerably settled at Martin Hall. I have laboured much in making it comfortable, and comfortable it now is. Our sitting-room is large, with three windows and two recesses — once windows, but now converted into book-cases, with green baize hanging half-way down the books, as in the College Green. The room is papered with cartridge paper, bordered with yellow vandykes edged with black. I have a good many books, but not all I want, as many of my most valuable ones are lying in London. I shall be very glad to get settled in a house at London, where I may collect all my chattels together, and move on contentedly for some dozen years in my profession. You will find little difficulty either in Anacreon or in Homer; the language will soon become familiar to you, and you will, I hope, apply yourself to it with assiduity. I remember William Taylor promising to give you some instruction in German when you were well enough acquainted with the ancient languages to begin the modern ones. I need not tell you how valuable such instruction would be, or how

gladly I should avail myself of such an opportunity were it in my power. It is of very great advantage to a young man to be a good linguist; he is more respected, and may be more useful; his sources of pleasure are increased; and, what in the present state of the world is to be considered, in case of necessity he has additional means of supporting himself. The languages, Harry — which I learnt almost as an amusement — have considerably contributed and do contribute to my support.

"You will send me your other translations from Anacreon, and in return I will always send you some piece which you had not before seen. I wish you would sometimes, on a fine evening, walk out, and write as exact a description of the sunset, and the appearance of everything around, as you can. You would find it a pleasant employment, and I can assure you it would be a very useful one. I should like you to send me some of these sketches; not of sunset only, but of any natural scene. If you have Ossian at hand, you may see what I mean in the description of night by five Scotch bards. Your neighbourhood to the sea gives you opportunities of seeing the finest effects of sunrise — fine weather, or storms; or you may contrast it with inland views and forest scenery, of which I believe you will see much in Nottinghamshire.

"Let me hear from you soon, and often, and regularly.

God bless you!

Your affectionate brother,

ROBERT SOUTHEY."

A few weeks spent in Herefordshire, and a pedestrian excursion into Wales, accompanied by his friend Mr. Danvers, were the chief variations in my father's life during this summer. In these journeys he found temporary relief from a state of ill health, which was beginning gradually to creep over him, partly induced, probably, by his ordinary sedentary habits, and intense mental application, and that anxiety about his "ways and means" which necessarily followed him through life, and of which he had already a full share, from the various relations who were wholly or chiefly dependent on him. The two following letters were written during these excursions.

To C. W. W. Wynn, Esq.

"Hereford, August 15. 1798.

"My dear Wynn,

"You will, I think, be somewhat amused at this copy of a note from a west-country farmer's daughter: it is genuine I assure you: —

"'Dear Miss,

"'The energy of the Races prompts me to assure you that my request is forbidden; the idea of which I had awkwardly nourished, notwithstanding my propensity to reserve. Mr. T. will be there; let me with confidence assure you that him and brothers will be very happy to meet you and brothers. Us girls cannot go for reasons; the attention of the cows claims our assistance in the evening.

Unalterably yours.'

Is it not admirable?

"I have seen myself Bedfordized *, and it has been a subject of much amusement. Holcroft's likeness is

* This is explained in the next letter.

admirably preserved. I know not what poor Lamb has done to be croaking there. What I think the worst part of the anti-Jacobine abuse, is the lumping together men of such opposite principles; this was stupid. We should have all been welcoming the Director, not the Theophilanthrope. The conductors of the Anti-Jacobine will have much to answer for in thus inflaming the animosities of this country. They are labouring to produce the deadly hatred of Irish faction; perhaps to produce the same end. Such an address as you mention might probably be of great use; that I could assist you in it is less certain. I do not feel myself at all calculated for anything that requires methodical reasoning; and though you and I should agree in the main object of the pamphlet, our opinions are at root different. The old systems of government I think must fall; but in this country the immediate danger is on the other hand,—from an unconstitutional and unlimited power. Burleigh saw how a parliament might be employed against the people, and Montesquieu prophesied the fall of English liberty when the legislature should become corrupt. You will not agree with me in thinking his prophecy fulfilled.

"Violent men there undoubtedly are among the democrats, as they are always called, but is there any one among them whom the ministerialists will allow to be moderate? The Anti-Jacobine certainly speaks the sentiments of government.

"Heywood's Hierarchie is a most lamentable poem, but the notes are very amusing. I fancy it is in most old libraries. I do not see anything that promises

well for ballads. There are some fine Arabic traditions that would make noble poems. I was about to write one upon the Garden of Irem; the city and garden still exist in the deserts invisibly, and one man only has seen them. This is the tradition, and I had made it the groundwork of what I thought a very fine story; but it seemed too great for a poem of 300 or 400 lines.

"I do not much like Don Carlos: it is by far the worst of Schiller's plays.

Yours affectionately,

R. SOUTHEY."

To Thomas Southey.

"Hereford, Aug. 29. 1798.

"My dear Tom,

"Your letter was very agreeable, for we began to doubt whether or no you were in the land of the living. We have been a fortnight in this part of the world, part of the time at Dilwyn, the original seat of the Tylers; and Shobdon was one of the places we visited. Our absence from home will not exceed a month, and though the time has passed pleasantly, I shall not be sorry to sit quietly down once more at Martin Hall. . . . . I have heard high commendation of you, somewhat in a round-about way, from a Taunton lady, who writes to a friend of hers, 'The gallant Southey for me.' Now, Tom, who the devil this Taunton damsel is, I could not find out, for the name was dropt by the way, so you must guess if you can.

"My Letters* are in the press, and my volume will soon,—it will include the 'Vision.' I have begun my English Eclogues, and written two which I rather like. My Kalendar also is greatly advanced since you left us; it now extends to some 1400 lines, and much of the remainder is planned out. I have learnt to rise early when at home, and written two new books of 'Madoc' wholly, before any one else in the house was up.

"Do you know that I have been caricatured in the Anti-Jacobin Magazine, together with Lloyd, Lamb, the Duke of Bedford, Fox, &c. &c. The fellow has not, however, libelled my likeness, because he did not know it, so he clapped an ass's head on my shoulders.

"I have done a great deal in the planning way since I have been in Herefordshire; you would, I think, be pleased with the skeleton of a long poem upon the destruction of the Dom Daniel, of which the outline is almost completed; when it will get farther I know not. I have much on my hands,—my Kalendar will probably fill three volumes, and the more the work gets on, the better does it please me.

"Edith has learnt to ride; she thinks of entering among the light horsewomen, and I hope to get her the rank of a Corporella.

"Did you hear of the glorious take in about Buonaparte at Bristol? Oh, Tom, I saw the newspaper boy pass by Martin Hall with a paper cap, inscribed *Buonaparte taken!* and the bells rung Sunday, and all day Monday. Tuesday I was at Cottle's when

* Letters from Spain and Portugal. 2d edit.

the mail was expected; the volunteers were ready to strike up, two men kneeling on the church and post-office with the flags ready to let fly. N. B. — It rained very hard. The four streets full of people, all assembled to see the triumphal entry of the mail coach, as it was to be crowned with laurels; you never saw so total a blank as when all proved to be false. . . .

"I shall now do better one year than the last, so, Tom, let us hope all things, for we have weathered worse times than we shall ever know again I trust.

God bless you.

R. S."

To Mrs. Southey.

"Bwlch, Brecknockshire, Oct. 14. 1798.

"Without a map, my dear Edith will know nothing of the place I date from, and if she have a map to refer to, very probably she may miss the name. . . . . What have we seen? Woods, mountains, and mountain glens and streams. In those words are comprehended all imaginable beauty. Sometimes we have been winding up the dingle side, and every minute catching the stream below through the wood that half hid it, always hearing its roar; then over mountains, where nothing was to be seen but hill and sky, their sides rent by the winter streams; sometimes a little tract of cultivation appeared up some coomb-place, so lonely, so beautiful: they looked as though no tax-gatherer ever visited them. I have longed to dwell in these solitary houses in a mountain vale,

sheltered by the hills and the trees that grow finely round the houses; the vale rich by the soil swept down the hills; a stream before the door, rolling over large stones — pure water, so musical, too! and a child might cross it; yet at wet seasons it must thunder down a torrent. In such scenes there is a simpleness of sublimity fit to feed imagination. . . . Yesterday at two we reached Brecon, a distance of eighteen miles. A little but clean ale-house afforded us eight pennyworth of bread, cheese, and ale, and we departed for Crickhowel, a stage of thirteen more. A woman whom we met, and of whom we asked the distance, measured it by the 'great Inn,' at Bwlch, on the way, and we determined to halt there. Before we got there, heavy rain overtook us, and we were wet the lower half when we reached the great Inn, at Bwlch, which is not quite so good as the memorable ale-house at Tintern. However, we have very good beds here; the cream was good, and the tea excellent.

"So we have eat, drunk, dried ourselves, and grown comfortable; also we have had the pleasure of the landlord's company, who, being somewhat communicative and somewhat tipsy, gave us the history of himself and family. . . . I much like the appearance of the Welsh women; they have all a character in their countenances, an intelligence which is very pleasant. Their round shrewd national physiognomy is certainly better than that of the English peasantry, and we have uniformly met with civility. There is none of the insolence and brutality which characterise our colliers and milk-women.

"At Merthyr we witnessed the very interesting custom of strewing the graves. They are fenced round with little white stones, and the earth in the coffin shape planted with herbs and flowers, and strewn with flowers. Two women were thus decorating a grave — the one a middle-aged woman, and much affected. This affected me a good deal; the custom is so congenial to one's heart; it prolongs the memory of the dead, and links the affections to them. . . . . This part of Brecknockshire is most beautiful. The Usk rolling through a rich and cultivated vale, and mountains rising on every side: we feel no fatigue, and I get more comfortable every day now our faces are turned homewards.

"God bless you, my dear Edith. Farewell. Now for the Black Mountain and St. David's.

To John May, Esq.

"Westbury, Dec. 14. 1798.

"My dear Friend,

"We are enduring something like a Kamtschatkan winter here. I am obliged to take my daily walk, and, though I go wrapped up in my great coat, almost like a dancing bear in hirsute appearance, still the wind pierces me. We are very deficient in having no winter dress for such weather as this. I am busy upon the Grecian history, or, rather, it is the employment of all my leisure. The escape of my Pythoness* was in the early ages, and they, I believe,

* My father had been urged by several friends to try his hand at dramatic composition; and this refers to one of the subjects on which he had purposed to write a play.

will suit me best. I must have the Pythian games celebrated; for the story, I have only invention to trust to. The costume of Greece will be new to the English drama, owing to the defects of our theatres; but I had rather get to some country and some people less known. Among the many thoughts that have passed over my mind upon this subject, I have had the idea of grounding stories, upon the oppression exercised at different periods of time upon particular classes of people; the Helots, for instance, the Albigenses, or the Jews. The idea of a tragedy upon one of the early martyrs has for some years been among my crude plans; but it would not suit the stage, because it would not suit the times. There is something more noble in such a character than I can conceive in any other; firm to the defiance of death in avowing the truth, and patient under all oppression, without enthusiasm, supported by the calm conviction that this is his duty. Among the Helots, something may be made of the infernal Crypteia: but I am afraid to meddle with a Spartan; there is neither feeling, thinking nor speaking like one who has been educated according to the laws of Lycurgus; knowledge of human nature is not knowledge of Lacedæmonian nature. The state of slavery among our own countrymen at an early period is better; the grievances of wardship, and the situation of a fief or villain. Dramatists and novelists have ransacked early history, and we have as many crusaders on the stage, and in the circulating library, as ever sailed to Palestine: but they only pay attention

to the chronology, and not to the manners or mind of the period.

Yours affectionately,
ROBERT SOUTHEY."

With one brief extract referring to his health I will conclude this chapter. It is from a letter to William Taylor, of Norwich, who had now become one of his regular correspondents, and to whom he was in the habit of submitting many of his minor pieces for criticism as he wrote them.

"I was very glad to see your handwriting again. I have been much indisposed, and my recovery, I fear, will be slow. My heart is affected, and this at first alarmed me, because I could not understand it; however, I am scientifically satisfied it is only a nervous affection. Sedentary habits have injured my health; the prescription of exercise prevents me from proceeding with the work that interests me, and only allows time for the task labour, which is neither pleasant to look at nor to remember. My leisure is quite destroyed: had it not been for this I should, ere this, have sent you the remainder of my Eclogues." *

* Westbury, Dec. 27. 1758.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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